

INDIA AS DESCRIBED
BY
THE ARAB TRAVELLERS



BY

R. ASHOKA K. SRIVASTAV, *M. A., Ph. D., D. Litt.*

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY,

GORAKHPUR UNIVERSITY

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**DEDICATED
TO
THE SACRED MEMORY OF MY PARENTS**

FOREWORD

I feel great pleasure in introducing Dr. Ashok Kumar Srivastava M. A., Ph. D., the young author of the present monograph. He is a lecturer in the Department of History, Gorakhpur University, and a rare combination of brains and brawns as he is, he is keenly interested in extending the frontiers of knowledge by dint of sustained research work. His D. Litt. thesis on the Disintegration of Hindu states (1175—1320 A. D.)” soon after his Ph. D. Degree is almost nearing completion and his latest book on Kutb-ud-din Aibak, a fine piece of research, is already in the press. Dr. Srivastava holds, and very rightly too, that the history of Medieval India, based as it is exclusively on the chronicles of the Muslim historians most of whom enjoyed patronage of their respective kings, presents only an one-sided picture of the existing Indian conditions and unless it is supplemented by Hindu sources, it will ever remain incomplete. Through the present monograph the author has endeavoured to remove these glaring shortcomings.

The accounts of the Arab writers about India are of great importance for the study of the early Medieval period of the Indian history. These Arab travellers visited India in the ninth and tenth centuries and each one of them left behind him an account of his own. Few of them were Merchant Sulaiman and Al Masudi visited India personally but others like Abu Zaid and Al Idrisi etc. never set their foot on the Indian soil. The accounts of the latter class of writers are based on informations

gathered either from other travellers visiting this country or on the accounts of those who had personally been to this sub-continent. The observations of these travellers are generally faulty in the sense that they very often overlook important facts or exaggerate a minor thing out of all proportions. This is because they happened to be strangers to the political conditions, manners and religious outlook of a foreign country. It was, therefore, but natural that in some cases they failed to give a correct picture of the society as it existed at that time. But all the same their observations, based as they are on first hand information, deserve to be accepted as a correct or a nearly correct picture of the Indian social system prevalent during these centuries. It is on this account that their accounts demands the best attention of the present day scholars who want to re-construct the contemporary history of India. It has also to be noticed that these Arab travellers often differ among themselves on certain issues. This is so because they observed the existing conditions of the society from different angles. Sometimes, they could not even understand what they were actually writing about. It is here that their accounts have to be supplemented by evidences collected from indigenous sources.

In the early part of the eleventh century India was visited by Al Beruni who had definitely better understanding of the Indian conditions and was well versed in Indian philosophy and religion, language and literature. He could, therefore, give a more faithful account of the contemporary period. And, therefore, while writing the present monograph, the writer has supplemented his information from the writings of this celebrated savant.

The young writer has collected information from their writings and has collected them to give as correct a picture as possible of the Indian society, religion and political condition as they existed during that period. However, the information being scanty and sometime faulty too, it has been difficult to draw a very true and faithful picture, but all the same it does not at all lose its claim or interest. He has critically examined their accounts particularly in the light of the Indian evidences which have increased their utility to a student of the early medieval Indian history. The author, therefore, deserves our hearty congratulations and his book a respectable place in historical literature.

R. B. Singh

PREFACE

In the present volume an attempt has been made to examine the accounts of the Arab travellers who visited our country in the ninth and tenth centuries respectively. It is further interesting to note that some of them never visited India personally, but they gathered their informations from others and, therefore, their accounts need verification. Keeping this fact in mind I have corroborated and supplemented their accounts with the help of the available contemporary Hindu sources. The extent of the subject is fairly wide and hence only a few important aspects could be attempted. The author, therefore, has only dealt in the present monograph with the social, religious and political conditions of India as described by the Arab travellers.

The whole work has been divided into four chapters. The first introductory chapter furnishes an account whether or not the Arab travellers visited our country along with the titles of their respective books. The second chapter deals with the Indian society; and the third and fourth with our religious and political conditions respectively. In all these chapters the accounts of the Arab travellers have been corrected and supplemented by the contemporary Indian records. The views of some of the modern scholars have also been critically examined.

The author regrets the indulgence by the readers for the complete omission of the diacritical marks in order to make symmetry and the narrative more simple and plain. Due to the carelessness of the proof-reader and the printers there are numerous printing errors in the book for which the author deeply regrets.

Very often the readers will find phrases and facts which have been borrowed from the original, but this has been done only to support and strengthen the incorporated ideas.

The author owes his deep sense of obligation and gratitude to his revered teacher Dr. R. B. Singh, Reader in the Department of Ancient History, culture and Archaeology, University of Gorakhpur, India for his encouragement and valuable suggestions. I am further indebted to him for he readily accepted my request to write a foreword for this monograph. I am also indebted to Dr. H. S. Srivastava, Head, Department of History [Med. & Mod]. University of Gorakhpur, who also taught me in B. A. and M. A. classes, for his inspiration and various other helps. The author also owes much to all the colleagues of the Department of History for their sincere co-operation and to his friends Mr. Yashbir Singh and Mr. K. B. Singh for typing out the manuscript.

But I would be failing in my duty if I do not owe my deepest sense of gratitude to my most respected elder brothers shri R. N. Srivastava, Shri S. C. Srivastava, M. A., LL. M., Shri G. C. Srivastava, M. A. [Hindi & English] and Dr. V. K. Srivastava, M. So. [Maths & Chem.] Ph. D. Gorakhpur, Ph. D. Australia, for reading and correcting the manuscript and to all the members of my family who never disturbed me while studying. I am further obliged to my student Km. Rehana Jamal and my loving nephews and nieces Ajai, Anoop, Anil, Renu and Ranjana for their assistance in preparing the index.

*Gorakhpur,
December 7, 1967*

Ashok K. Srivastava

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| A. B. O. R. I. | Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute. |
| A. I. | Al Beruni's India, translated in English by E. C. Sachau, 1964. |
| B. F. | Tarikh-i-Firishta, translated by John Briggs under the title of the Rise of the Mohomedan Power in India, Vol. I, 1908. |
| Bib. Ind. | Bibliotheca Indica. |
| D. H. N. I. | Danastic History of Northern India, by H. C. Ray. |
| E. D. ² | Elliot and Dowson's History of India, As Told by Its Own Historians. |
| E. I. | Epigraphia Indica. |
| J. A. S. B. | Journal of the Royal Society of Bengal. |
| M. H. I. | History of Mediæval Hindu India, Vol. II by C. V. Vaidya, 1924. |
| M. I. Q. | Medieval Indian Quarterly, Aligarh. |
| P. O. I. H. C. | Proceedings of Indian History Congress. |
| R. C. | Ram Charita, edited by R. C. Majumdar, R. C. Basak and N. G. Banerji, Rajshahi. |
| R. T. | Rajatarangini of Kalhana, translated by M. A. Stien, 1900. |

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CHAPTER I

Introductory

The accounts of the early Arab writers¹ are of great importance for the study of the early Medieval Period of Indian History. In the absence of proper contemporary Indian historical resources, these Arab writers deserve to be summarised separately. It is a misfortune for us that the original works of these Arab writers are not available as these are mostly translated into French only. But we can take use of some of the extracts of H. M. Elliot's most celebrated, historical and monumental work², including some other modern works and translations. It is pleasant to note here that these Arab travellers, as narrated in the following pages, exactly depict the social, religious and political conditions, especially of the period during which they visited India from time to time.

These Arab travellers. visited India, particularly in between 9th and 11th centuries and left an account of their own. It is, further, interesting to note that some of them never visited India personally but they gathered their informations from others. European historians, who

1 Elliot refers to these writers as "Early Arab Geographers", who travelled India several times, and left an account of their own. It is also significant to note that a few of them never visited India, But they seem to have derived their information from those who visited India.

2 Elliot and Dowson : History of India As Told By Its Own Historians, Vol.I

made earliest attempts to construct the systematic history of India of the early Medieval period, relied almost exclusively on these records. But a little critical study of these accounts will disclose that they are not without faults, and they bear several topographical errors. It has also been noticed that the Arab Geographers often differ among themselves on certain issues which have given considerable misguided informations.

Since Arab Geographers did not stay in India for a long period and could not travel the whole of India, they mostly gathered their informations from the hearsay narrations or recitals. They also, had no knowledge of the Indian topography, social structure and the religion of the people. Similarly, they were not aware of the many facts which were quite in vogue at the time they made their visits.

Notwithstanding the aforesaid lack of proper informations, a critical study of their accounts by themselves reveal certain amount of wrong informations and error of judgement which they have, hitherto, transmitted to us. It becomes, therefore, necessary that the accounts should be reviewed and read along with the contemporary Hindu records which are, though, few, but all the same, are quite important. This will help us greatly in making a correct and objective estimate of the history of the period under review, and in reconstructing a Social, Religious and Political History of India from the 8th to the 11th century A.D. For this purpose, the contemporary literary works of the Hindu authors, inscriptions, coins, epigraphic evidences

and various other sources, have to be utilized fully and they should be compared with that of the Arab Travellers. This can help us to arrive at a fair conclusion. However, inspite of many accompanying defects and shortcomings, the accounts of these travellers can not be ignored. Rather they are very valuable informants from the Indian point of view.

The first traveller noted by Elliot in his monumental work 'History of India, As Told By Its Own Historians' volume I, is the Merchant Sulaiman, who landed on the Persian Gulf, and made several voyages to India and China. He completed his book entitled 'Salsilatut Tawarikh' in the middle of the ninth century A.D. (in about 851 A.D.). Mr. M. Reinaud was the first scholar who published the book in 1844 A.D. appended with a translation and short notes which afford mines of valuable informations and nice criticisms. But Mr. M. Reinaud does not seem to be very accurate about the title that he gave to this book. He mentions two travellers, while there was only one who wrote an account of his own travels¹. But it seems, with all probability, that the second part of this book was completed by another traveller Abu Zaidu-l Hasan of Siraf. It is, further, interesting to note that this traveller never travelled India and China, as he himself expressly writes that he "made it his to modify and complete the work of Sulaiman, by questioning travellers to those countries." Al Masudi met this Abu Zaid at Basra, in 303 A.H. (916 A.D.), and acknowledges to have derived information from him. On the other hand Abu Zaid was

1 E. D., Vol. I, p. 2

equally profited and much indebted to Masudi for some of his statements. Although, Abu Zaid never mentions Masudi by name but refers to him as a "trustworthy person". While concluding his work, Abu Zaid writes: "Such is the most interesting matter that I have heard, among the many accounts to which maritime adventure has given birth. I have refrained from recording the false stories which sailors tell, and which the narrators themselves do not believe. A faithful account although short, is preferable to all. It is God who guides us in the right way". These words of Abu Zaid further support the fact that his accounts were mostly derived from the knowledge of the others and not that of his own.

The two writers have given some useful accounts regarding the political, social and religious conditions of India. It is misfortune that while describing some of the kingdoms of India, Merchant Sulaiman mentions 'Tafak'—which is a small state and according to him was situated by the side of the Balhara¹. He further describes that "The women" of this place are white, and the most beautiful in India" and "The king lives at peace with his neighbours, because his soldiers are so few. He esteems the Arabs as highly as the Balhara does"². It is very difficult to identify this place as the name given by our traveller cannot be equated with any Indian name. Reinaud wrongly identified it with Aurangabad³. This mistake is perhaps due to Sulaiman's placement of it by the side of the Balhara. But C.V. Vaidya, on the other hand

1 E. D., Vol. I., p. 4

2 Ibid., p. 5

3 As quoted in E. D., Vol. I, p. 360

correctly identifies it with Jalandhara or as a part of the Punjab and the word 'Tak' comes nearest to Tafak¹. Similarly, he mentions many other places which still need to be identified² correctly.

The next noted traveller is Abu-l-Kasim Ubaidu-Ilah bin Abdu-llah bin Khurdadba who is popularly known to us as Ibn Khurdadba. His ancestors were fire worshippers but subsequently they embraced Islam and became Muhammadans. Ibn Khurdadba held a high office under the vigorous ruler of the Caliphs, where he employed his leisure periods in the topographical and geographical researches. As a result Ibn Khurdadba became a great geographer and completed the valuable work entitled, 'Book of Roads and Kingdoms'. But his Indian accounts can be found in his book entitled "Kitabul Masalik wa-l Mamalik" in which, describing about the importance of the Balhara state of India and the use of wine as unlawful, he divides the Hindus in seven classes. He also writes about the various states of India and according to him in India, there were forty-two religious sects. He makes special reference of the king of Balhara as "The greatest king of India," who wears a ring in which is inscribed the following sentence: "What is begun with resolution ends with success". It is still not known correctly as to when Ibn Khurdadba completed his work. But since he died in 300 A.H., (912 A.D.) he must have finished his work either towards the close of the ninth century, or in the beginning of the tenth century.

Al Masudi is the next important traveller of the tenth century who wrote his book "Muruju-l Zahab" some time in the middle of the tenth century. The date of his

1 M. H. 1., Vol. 11, p. 163

2 For the places mentioned by Merchant Sulaiman see E. D., Vol. 1, pp.3-6

birth is not known to us but his death occurred in Egypt in 345 A.H. (956 A.D.). And before his death Al Masudi travelled far and wide. He visited India in 915 A.D., and most probably stayed here for two years¹.

Al Masudi was an acute and prolific Arab writer who deservedly continues to be regarded as one of the most admired writers in the Arabic language. He was not only a writer of high order but also a well-known historian, geographer and encyclopaedist². As a historian he is regarded as an unbiased and objective reporter of events. He is also seen in criticising the legendary ideas and fiction wherever he feels necessary³. Al Masudi was not simply an enlightened thinker, but was much ahead his contemporaries⁴. He enumerates a series of ancient kings of India starting from Brahma who, according to him, reigned for 366 years. Al Masudi, personally, visited many places of India and gave clear account of the political and social customs of the Hindus. The main feature of his work is that he also mentions about the tongue and language of the Indian people of the various places. Al Masudi greatly admires the kings of Balhara for their greater respect for and protection to Islam.

Our next Arab informant is Abu Ishak Al Istakhri who wrote his famous book "Kitbu-l-Akalim" in 340 A. H. (951 A. D.). He also writes about the various Kings and States of India. Al Istakhri is more particular about giving the names of the important cities of India.

1 M.I.Q., Vol. II, July-Oct, 1957, p. 103 : And on the travels of Al Masudi, see S. Maqbool Ahmad, the Islamic Culture, Vol. XXVIII, No. 4.

2 M.I.Q., Vol. III, July-Oct, 1957, p. 103

3 Ibid., p. 103

4 Ibid., p. 103

Ibn Haukal is yet another important Arab writer who after visiting various countries finished his work "Ashkalu-l Bilad" (or the Kitabu-l Masalik wa-l Mama-lik) in 366 A. H. (976 A. D.). The real name of Ibn Haukal was Muhammad Abu-l Kasim, who was a native of Baghdad. When he was merely a child, the powers of the Caliph had greatly declined and Baghdad itself fell into the hands of the Turks. After attaining his manhood, he left Baghdad in 331 A. H. (943 A. D.), and passing through the various Muslim countries, he returned to the city in 358 A. H. (968 A. D.) The following year Ibn Haukal was in Africa and completed his work a years afterwords. Like Al Istakhri, Ibn Haukal also discusses largely about the cities and frequently mentions about the religion and language of the Indian people. The next important Arab writer for our study is Rashidu-d-din who wrote his book Jamiu-t Tawarikh in the year 710 A. H. (1310 A. D.). Al Idrisi also occupies an important place among the Arab writers who wrote about India. His real name was Abu Abdu-llah Muhammad who was born at Ceuta, in Morocco, towards the end of the 11th century. He was the member of a family which descended from an ancestor named 'Idrisi' and so he came to be known by the name of Al Idrisi. He personally visited Europe and finally settled in Sicily. It was at this place where he was encouraged to write a book on geography. He, refers in his preface, to the various authors whose works were taken help of in the completion of the book. Further, informations were derived from other travellers, whose verbal statements are required to be compared and tested. Al Idrisi tried to touch every aspect of India-Social,

Religious and Political, but his statements embody some misguided informations and error of judgement. Writing about the country of the Balhara state he writes "In the country of the Balhara concubinage is permitted with all persons except married women. Thus a man may have intercourse with his daughter, his sister, or his aunts, provided they be unmarried."¹ It is most unfortunate that such social acts are neither to be found in the Muslim nor in the Hindu society of India. This proves that Al Idrisi who never visited India personally, derived this information from some most unreliable and quite disreputable travellers and mentioned it without having tested it. Therefore, his statement should be studied with great care and caution. Zakaria Al Kazwini's work "Asaru-l Bilad" which was written in 661 A. H. (1263 A. D.)² has also been occasionally consulted. Born in Persia, Al Kazwini was not actually a traveller, but compiled his works from the writings of Istakhri, Ibn Haukal and others, whom he regularly cites as his authorities.

Al Beruni's³ work entitled "Kitab-ul-Hind" is a mine of information. And, therefore, separate researches may be done on this valuable work. It is difficult to utilise his full account in this small work. But his statements are frequently quoted only to corroborate the accounts as left by the Arab travellers whose names have been mentioned above.

1 E. D., Vol. I, p. 89

2 According to Casiri it was written in 661 A. H. (1263 A. D.) or according to Haji Khalifa it was Composed in 674 (1275 A. D.).see E.D., Vol. I, p. 94.

3 He was born in 973 A. D. in the territory of modern khiva.

CHAPTER II

Hindu Society

Although the observations of Arab writers and Geographers are not sufficient to give the complete picture of the social condition of the period, but, nonetheless, they are quite useful in depicting a picture of the contemporary, society, how soever partial that may be.

Caste System : In connection with the number of castes, the Arab travellers speak of seven castes only. Ibn Khurdadba¹ completing his book in the beginning of the 10th century A. D., thus, writes that "There are seven classes of the Hindus, viz., 1st. Sabkufria, among whom are men of high caste, and from among whom kings are chosen. The people of the other six classes do the men of this class homage, and them only. 2nd, Brahma, who totally abstain from wine and fermented liquors. 3rd, Kataria, who drink not more than three cups of wine; the daughters of the class of Brahma are not given in marriage to the sons of this class, but the Brahmas take their daughters. 4th, Sudaria, who are by profession husbandmen. The 5th Baisura are artificers

1 This traveller recorded his statements in the early 10th century A. D., and died in the year 912 A. D. He left a fairly good account of the Indian trade, including political and social conditions of this country. Kitbu-l Masalik Wa-l Mamalik, Tr. E. D., Vol. I, pp. 12-17; Arab Geography, pp. 30, 31, 32

and domestics. The 6th, Sandalia, who perform menial offices. 7th, Lahud; their women are fond of adorning themselves, and the men are fond of amusements and games of skill¹. Incidentally, this observation of the division of Hindu caste into seven groups which though differ in some respects from those assigned by Ibn Khurdadba, is corroborated by the accounts given by Megasthenise as well who came to the country in the 4th century B. C². It is not also easy to identify the names given by Ibn Khurdadba. However, the first is unintelligible, the second is evident, the third seems to indicate the Kshatriyas, the fourth the Sudras, the fifth the Vaisya, the 6th the Chandalas, the 7th the Bazigars and itinerant jugglers³.

This division of seven castes is also supported by Al Idrisi⁴, who more distinctly narrates that "The Indians are divided into seven castes. The first is that of the Sakria, these are the most noble; from among them kings are chosen, and from no others. All the other castes pay homage to them, but they render homage to no one. Next come the Brahmans, who are the religious class. They

1 Kitabu-l Masalik Wa-l Mamalik, Tr. E. D., Vol. I., pp. 16-17. None of the early Geographers notice this division into tribes or classes, but they appear to have known it.

2 Megasthenise Fragmenta, E. A. Schwanbeck, pp. 42, 121, 127, as quoted in E. D. Vol. I., p. 17. The Grecian authors, too, on the authority of Megasthenise, divide the tribes of India into seven, and attribute the offices to them which are very different from those assigned by Ibn Khurdadba, E. D., Vol. I, p. 17

3 E. D., Vol. I, p. 17 and note I

4 Al Idrisi completed his work Nuzhatu-l Mushtak in the 12th century, which gives an important account of India for our study. E. D., Vol. I, pp. 74-73 ;and Arab Geography, pp. 108-120

dress in the skins of tigers and other animals. Sometimes one of them, taking a staff in his hand, will assemble a crowd around him, and will stand from morn till eve speaking to his auditors of the glory and power of God, and explaining to them the events which brought destruction upon the ancient people, that is, upon the Brahmans. They never drink wine nor fermented liquors. They worship idols (whom they consider to be) able to intercede with the Most High. The third caste is that of the Katriyas, who may drink as much as three ratls¹ of wine, but not more, lest they lose their reason. This caste may marry Brahman women, but Brahmans cannot take their women to wife. Next comes the Sharduya, who are labourers and agriculturists; then the Basya, who are citizens and mechanics, then the Sabdaliya, (or Sandaliya), who are singers, and whose women are noted for their beauty; and, lastly, the Zakya, who are jugglers, tumblers, and players of various instruments²." "This is a pretty correct description of caste", observes C. V. Vaidya" as it existed in India in the 9th and 10th centuries and as it struck an outsider who though not acquainted with its intricacies cannot but have marked the essential features of it³." In this list the royal families of India (Sabkutria) are placed even above the Brahmins. But on account of their valour, high morals and undaunted resistance against the Mohammedans, they have been rightly placed on the top. They even distinguished themselves from the ordinary Kshatriyas⁴. The other four classes are obviously

1 Ratls, one pound Troy

2 Nuzhatu-l Mushtak, Tr. E. D., Vol. I, p. 76

3 C. V. Vaidya : History. of Mediæval Hindu India, Vol. II, 1924, p. 178

4 Ibid., p. 178

those of the Brahmins, ordinary Kshatriyas, the Sudras, the Vaisyas. The Sandalias are evidently the Chandalas, and lastly the Lahuds who appear to be the rope-dancers and others.

Al Beruni, who visited India in the 11th century A.D., divides the castes of India into only four which, according to him, existed from the beginning. He places the Brahmins on the top. According to him the book of Hindus tell that the Brahmins were created from the head of Brahma and for this reason the Hindus consider them as the very best of mankind. The next caste is the Kshatriya, who were created, as the Hindus say, from the shoulders and hands of Brahma. But they are not much below in rank than that of the Brahmins. After them follow the Vaisya, who were created from the thigh of Brahma. And lastly come the Sudras who were created from his feet¹. Then Al Beruni also narrates that after the Sudras come Antyaja who though render various kinds of services are not yet reckoned amongst any caste, except only as members of a certain craft or profession. There are eight guilds in it the fuller, shoemaker, juggler, the basket and shield maker, the sailor, fisherman, the hunter on wild animals and of birds, and the weaver. They freely intermarry with each other except the fuller, shoemaker, and weaver.² The four castes as narrated above do not live together with them in one and the same place. These guilds live near the village and towns of the four castes but outside them.³

1 A. I., Vol., I, p. 100

2 A. I., Vol. I, p. 101

3 Ibid., p. 101

But the divisions of the Hindu castes as described by the early Arab travellers including Al Beruni do not find full support from the available contemporary Indian records. However, some of the Indian evidences show that there were large number of castes and sub-castes existed at the time these travellers actually visited India. Kalhan's Rajtarangini describes as sixty four castes.¹ This statement is further supported by Kullukabhatta.² The Brihaddharma Purana gives number as 41 mixed castes, having the status of Sudaras.³ Sometime it has been described useless and difficult to count the number of mixed castes.⁴ Thus, in the face of the varied accounts both of the Arab travellers as well as on the Indian records, it is very difficult to arrive at a fair conclusion.

The chief characteristics of the four castes of the Hindu society viz, Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras, have been distinctly discriminated by Al Beruni, "The Brahmana" according to him, "must have an ample intellect, a quiet heart, truthfull speech, much patience; he must be master of his senses, a lover of justice, of evident purity, always directed upon worship, entirely bent upon religion." Then the "Kshatriya must fill the hearts with terror, must be brave and high-minded, must have ready speech and liberal hand, not minding dangers, only intent upon carrying the great tasks of his calling to a happy end." "The Vaisya" according to him "is to occupy himself with agriculture with the acquisition of

1 R. T., VIII 2407

2. Manu x 31. (Manusmriti-with Kullukabhatta's) Commentary, Published. Nirnaya-Sagar Press.

3 Briddharma Purana, Edited by M. Haraprasad Shastri, pub: Bibliotheca Indica, Calcutta, 1897.

4 Brahmapavivarta Purana (Ed. Jivanta Vidyasagar) Calcutta, 1888.

cattle, and with trade". And lastly a "Sudra is to endeavour to render services and attentions to each of the preceding classes, in order to make himself liked by them".¹ Enumerating the various duties of the four castes Al Beruni, further, writes that a Kshatriyas "rules the people and defends them for he is created for this task". According to him it is the duty of a Vaisya "to practise agriculture and to cultivate the land, lend the cattle and remove the needs of the Brahmins." And the "Sudra is like a servant of the Brahmins," taking care of his affairs and serving him."² To learn the Vedas was only the privilege of the Brahmins and Kshatriyas³ but Vaisyas and Sudras were completely deprived of this privilege, the Brahmins teach the Veda to the Kshatriyas, the latter learn it but could not do the same.⁴ But the Vaisyas and Sudras were neither allowed to hear nor to pronounce and recite the vedas. If they were found disregardful of these social taboos "the Brahmins drag" them "before the magistrate" and punished them by having their tongues cut off".⁵ These accounts reveal that the Arab travellers had no real understanding of the system of Hindu Society and its organisational structure with the result that they failed to understand its chief characteristic, too. Due to this lack of understanding they simply divided the Hindu Society in a manner suiting their own convenience. Al Beruni, who is regarded as more authentic observer, himself seems to have depended

1 A. I., Vol. I, p. 103

2 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 136

3 Ibid., Vol. I, 104

4 Ibid., Vol. I, p. 125

5 Ibid., Vol. I, p. 125

himself more upon the ancient scriptures and stated according to what he had read in them instead of what he actually found the Hindu Society at the time of his visit. But inspite of these shortcomings, their significance can not be minimised as they really help us in assessing the construction of the Hindu Society of that period.

The caste system in our country seemed to have two aspects, the occupational and the matrimonial, and from the description of Ibn Khurdadba and Al Idrisi we may conclude that matrimonial aspect had something to do with the development of caste system in India. Generally, the marriages were then restricted within its own caste only. But here one exception has been noticed by Ibn Khurdadba¹, that the Brahmins could marry the daughter of a Kshatriya. But a Kshatriya could not marry the daughter of a Brahmin². The Kshatriya had most probably a similar privilege and could marry a Vaisya woman³. But this privilege has not been shown by Ibn Khurdadba⁴. Al Idrisi⁵ observes that the Kshatriyas could marry, Brahman women, but Brahmins cannot take their women to wife.

The observations of Ibn Khurdadba are supported by Indian sources as well which speak of Anuloma marriage

1 It has also been mentioned by Megasthenese, as quoted by C. V. Vaidya, M. H. I., Vol. II, p. 179.

2 E. D., Vol. I, p. 16

3 Ibid., pp. 179-180

4 According to the Manu Smriti a Brahman could marry the Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra wives. The Kshatriya could marry still a Kshatriya and a Vaisya woman, and a Brahman could marry three. This is laid down by Vaisya as well. But one thing is remarkable there that the Smriti provides that a man must marry a lower caste women of his own caste, which seems to have been the general practice in this period which eventually led to the stoppage of marriage with other caste women. M. H. I., Vol. II, pp. 179-180

5 E. D., Vol I, p. 76

during this period. But this support is wanting in case of the observation of Al Idrisi who refers to the custom of Pratiloma marriage which does not appear to be in vogue during this period. It is also remarkable that a Brahman only in affluent circumstances or in high position could marry with Kshatriya or Vaisya wives¹. It is further interesting to note that Al Beruni visiting India early in the eleventh century writes that "In our days, however, the Brahmanas, although it is allowed to them, never marry any women except one of their own castes."²

But we find a peculiar description as given by Al Idrisi. He observes that "In the country of the Balhara concubinage is permitted with all persons except married women. Thus, a man may have intercourse with his daughter, his sister, or his aunts,* provided they be unmarried."³ This observance of Al Idrisi is applicable neither to the Indian society nor to the Muslims. If at all it was so, it might have been prevalent among some aborigines and not among the Hindus, for there is no such reference in Indian literature of the period.

As regards the occupational aspect, it is evident that the Brahmanas were at full liberty to choose any of the lower castes or their own peculiar profession, viz., the priesthood. Al Beruni testifying to the high ranks of the Brahmanas in the civil and military services states that originally the affairs of Government and war were in their hands⁴. And thus the Kshatriya and the Brah-

1 M. H. I., Vol. II, p. 180

2 A. I., Vol. II, p. 156

3 E. D., Vol. I, p. 89

4 A. I., Vol. II, p. 161

mans both were assigned with the duties of ruling and fighting.¹ The Brahmans, generally, enjoyed high ranks in civil services. But, sometimes, they could have taken up the military profession as well.² So, during this period, Brahmans are seen engaged in fighting.³ The Rajtarangini also records the skill of Brahmans as soldiers in the battle field.⁴ Not only this but inscriptions of the Chandella, kalachuri and Chalukya dynasties are also in a way to support the Brahmans as military officers.⁵ Thus, corroborating the views of what Ibn Khurdadba has recorded, Merchant Sulaiman,⁶ the

1 Ibid., pp. 161-62

2 Manu also allowed the Brahmans to take up arms in times of distress; to protect themselves, the cows and Brahmans; and to prevent the admixture of Varnas (Kautilya IX 2). A note of dissent has been expressed in Apastamba (Apastamba I. 10. 29. 7), in this regard. Similarly, the general practice is also referred to in the Sukranitisara: ed. Sarkar, IV. 7. 599

3 In Bengal also we find an illustration of Goverdhana. the father of Bhatta Bhavadeva, who was not only a distinguished scholar but a warrior too. Inscriptions of Bengal, Vol.III by N. G. Majumdar, p. 33, verse 12

4 R. T., VII. 1480 and VIII. 1013, 1071

5 B. P. Majumdar : Socio-Economic History of Northern India (1960, p. 85

6 Amongst all the Arab travellers mentioned by Sir. Elliot, the name of Merchant Sulaiman comes first, Mr. Renaudot, however, mentions only two; Merchant Sulaiman and Abu Zaid, who are said to have completed the work named Salsilat-u-t Tawarikh. But Elliot fastens doubt to Renaudot's this observation. According to him, the work was completed only by Merchant Sulaiman and there was no contribution of Abu Zaid either. Merchant Sulaiman, who was established on the coast of the Persian Gulf or its environs, probably in Basra, and had undertaken many voyages from the Persian Gulf to India and China, completed his work either in 827 A.H. or in 851 A. D. But now it seems almost certain that the second portion of this work must have been completed by Abu Zaid. The political condition of India, as observed by Sulaiman in his short but authentic description shows, as it really was at that period, in existence the prowess of the kingdoms of Rastrakutas, the Pratiharas, and the Palas of the Duccan, the Gangetic Valley and the Bengal. We will discuss these statements in detail along with other ones. E. D., Vol. I, pp. 1-11; The Arab Geography; pp. 23-28

other Arab traveller records that, "In all these kingdoms the nobility is considered to form but one family. Power resides in it alone. The princes name their own successors. It is the same with learned men and physicians. They form a distinct caste, and the profession never goes out of the caste." While describing about the country of Balhara or the Vallabhi rajas, Al Idrisi points it out in the following words that, "It is hereditary here as in other parts of the country, where, when a king ascends a throne he takes the name of his predecessor and transmits it to his heir. This is a regular custom from which these people never depart."² Abu zaid³ writes that, "Among the Indians there are men, who are devoted to religion and men of science, whom they call Brahmans. They have also their poets who live at the courts of their kings, astronomers, philosophers, diviners and those who draw women from the flight of crows etc. Among them are

1 E. D., Vol. I, p: 6

2 Ibid., p. 86

3 Abu Zaid seems to have completed the unaccomplished work of Merchant Sulaiman vide his own expression, given very pointedly in his narrative, in the very beginning. Thereat he declares that his sole object was to modify and complete the narrative of Sulaiman the Merchant with the help of what he had learnt in the course of his studies and gathered from persons who had voyaged in the oriental seas. He almost completed this work sometimes before the approach of the first quarters of the 10th Century. Abu Zaid seems to have visited India personally but dedicated his work on the sayings of Al Masudi. Although, Abu Zaid never mentions the name of Masudi from whom he appears to have borrowed his informations, even then, he always refers him as a trustworthy person. Similarly, Abu Zaid speaks of a fact of magnificent courage performed by an Indian, who, before throwing himself into a blazing fire, pierced his heart with his dagger. For this he invokes the testimony of a traveler, who was no other than Al Masudi, who has stated that he himself had witnessed this very performance with his own eyes. In the Similar fashion he adds to his narrative some other informations; Arab Geography, p. 54; and for other informations see E. D., Vol. II pp. 7-11 and also. The Arab Geography, p. 82.

diviners and jugglers, who perform most astonishing feats. These observations are specially applicable to Kanauj, a large country forming the empire of Jurz.”¹ All these observations clearly show that the Brahmans followed the most varied professions of intellect and that Brahmans of Kanauj or rather northern India were still ahead of the rest of India, as in the days of Bana.² It is also interesting to note that in those days the Brahmans were exempted from capital punishments. The privilege of the Brahmans has been noticed by Al Beruni who writes that, “If the murderer is a Brahman, and the murdered person a member of another caste, he is only bound to do expiation consisting of fasting, prayers, and almsgiving.”³ To kill a Brahman called ‘Vajrabrahmahatya, was the greatest crime. Further, the killing of a cow, the drinking of wine and whoredom, especially with the wife of one’s own father and teacher⁴ were other severe crimes prevalent in the Hindu Society. But for all crimes, writes Al Beruni, the kings do not for any of these crimes kill a Brahman or Kshatriya, but they confiscate his property and banish him from their country⁵. Al Beruni further records that “a man of a caste under those of the Brahman and Kshatriya kills a man of the same caste, he has to do expiation, but besides the kings inflict upon him a punishment in order to establish an example.”⁶ This observation of the special privilege of the Brahmans is also confirmed by the Indian literary sources which supplement Al Beruni’s statement and mention

1 E. D., Vol. I, p. 10

2 M. H. I., Vol. II, p. 181

3 A. I., Vol. II, p. 162

4 Ibid., p. 162

5 Ibid., p. 162

6 Ibid., p. 162

that the most severe punishment for a Brahman was banishment.⁴

But it is difficult to presume that Brahmans enjoyed similar privileges as recorded by Al Beruni. The Kubjikamata records that the sin of killing of a Brahman could be brushed aside by repeating a certain mantra for 20,00,000 times.² Rajtarangini also records many instances when Brahmans were executed by some tyrant persons.³ Al Beruni also exempts the Brahmans from the payment of the various taxes as mentioned by him.⁴ This is further supported by the author of the Manasollasa.⁵ But this privilege may not have been extended to the ordinary Brahmans. For the Indian records do not show this type of privilege of the Brahmans,⁶ and the evidences, referred to in some of the later inscriptions for the exemption of the Brahmans from the taxes⁷ are exceptions, were based on personal considerations.⁸ But the system to appoint Brahmans as Ministers seems to have been a common feature adopted by the Hindu rulers of the age.⁹ The course was followed by the

1 Barhaspatya Arthashastra, Edited by F. W. Thomas, Lahore, 1921 ch. I, verse 17: Laghvarhannitisastra I. 1, 37

2 Quoted from B. P. Majumdar : Op. cit., p. 88

3 R, T., VIII, 1013, 2060

4 A. I., Vol. II, p. 149

5 Manasollasa, Gaekward's Oriental Series, Baroda, Vol. I, p. 44, verse 166

6 See also Ghoshal, U. N. 'Contributions to the History of the Hindu Revenue System' Calcutta 1929, p. 138; Altekar, A. S. 'State and Government in Ancient India, Benaras edition, 1949, p. 195.

7 Inscription of Gujarat dated 1230 A. D. and two others in Orissa, dated 1436 and 1470 A. D. refer to such exemptions of Brahmans, E. I., VIII, 211 : Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, LXII (1893) Pt. I, No. 1

8 See also, B. P. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 88

9 Ibid., pp. 89-90

Chahamanas, Chalukyas, Kalachuris and the Chandellas who except in some circumstances appointed Brahmans as their ministers on hereditary basis.¹ Considering all these facts it may be safely assumed that at the time Al Beruni visited India the Brahmans & the Kshatriyas both formed the highest class of the Hindu society and enjoyed various privileges. Similarly, Al Masudi² very distinctly writes about the Brahmans to the effect, that, "They are honoured by Indians as forming the most noble and illustrious caste."³ And "Royalty is limited to the descendants of one family, and never goes to another. The same is the case with the families of the wazirs, kazis, and other high officers. They are all (hereditary and) never changed or altered."⁴ A Brahman also stood very high in the eyes of Manu who calls him, "The Lord of (all) castes (Varna),"⁵ and that whatever exists in the world is the property of the Brahman.⁶

1 Ibid., p. 90

2 Al Masudi, an acute observer and writer whose date of birth is still not known, died in Egypt in 345 A. H., or in A. D. 956. He had made successive journeys to Persia, India, Ceylon, Transoxiana, the coast of the Caspian Sea, Egypt, and to different parts of Africa, Spain and the Greek Empire. Al Masudi, therefore, gave us a vast and most descriptive account including Ancient India. He seems to have visited India in 915 A. D., and most probably stayed here for two years. Al Masudi was well informed and had a vast knowledge of history Geography, beliefs, superstitions, and as a matter of fact nothing remained untouched to him. The main defect of his character is that he is found sometimes as an imaginary figure. But his book *Murul Zahad*, is an informative work of the highest order, E. D., Vol. I, pp. 18-25 : The Arab Geography, pp. 30, 31, 32 and 42; MIQ., Vol. III, 1957, p. 103; and also travels of Al Masudi' see S. M. Ahmad in 'Islamic Culture', Vol. XXVIII., No. 4.

3 E. D., Vol. I, p. 19

4 Ibid., p. 20

5 Manu, Chapter X, pp. 401-402

6 Manu, Chapter I, pp. 24 26

But the Brahmans were accorded the highest rank in the medieval society,¹ and specially religion was exclusively monopolised by them.² However, we may conclude this disquisition on caste with a remark of Al Masudi that "The Hindus are distinct from all other black people, as the Zanjis, the Damadams, and others, in point of intellect, government, philosophy, strength of constitution and purity of colour."³

Al Beruni also describes that if a Hindu was captured and taken away by the Muslims as a prisoner he was never allowed to return to his own faith.⁴ And if a Brahman eats in the house of a Sudra for sundry days, he is expelled from his caste and can never regain it.⁵ This is the petty correct description of Al Beruni as the Hindus, since the very beginning, were noted for their conservative outlook. They always treated the Muslims as Mlecchhas and cow eaters and therefore, for the obvious reasons, a Hindu was compelled to observe a separation from them. It was one of the reasons for the wide and rapid circulation of Islam in India or the Hindus who were forced to accept Islam and were in no case allowed by the orthodox Hindus to return to their ancestor's faith even if they had keenly desired as such. The record is also applicable to the Hindu society but not so rigidly as in the case of Muslims.

1 Khaliq Ahmad Nizami: Some Aspects of Religion and Politics In India During The Thirteenth Century, 1961, p. 67

2 Ibid., p,

3 E. D., Vol. I, p. 20

4 A. I., Vol. II, pp. 162-63

5 Ibid, p. 163

Drink and Food : The people of India were little addicted to drink. The Brahmans, as of old, were total abstainers from all intoxicating liquors. Even the Kshatriyas, especially the king, are also described as such by Arab travellers. Al Masudi observes that "The Hindus abstain from drinking wine, and censure those who consume it; not because their religion forbids it, but in the dread of its clouding their reason and depriving them of its powers. If it can be proved of one of their kings, that he has drunk (wine), he forfeits the crown; for he is (not considered to be) able to rule and govern (the empire) if his mind is affected"¹ Similarly, Al Idrisi remarks that the Brahmans "never drink wine nor fermented liquors"² But according to the same traveller Kshatriyas were allowed to "drink as much as three ratls of wine, but not more, lest they should lose their reason."³ Ibn Khurdadba makes a strange observation that "The kings and people of Hind regard fornication as lawful, and wine as unlawful. This opinion prevails throughout Hind, but the kings of Kumar⁴ holds both fornication and the use of wine as unlawful. The king of Sarandip conveys wine from Irak for his consumption."⁵

1 Murujul Zahab, Tr., E. D., Vol. I, p. 20

2 Nuzhatul Mushtak, Tr., E. D., Vol. I, p. 76

3 Ibid., p. 76

4 Kumar is the country near about Cape Comorin, Travancore, etc. Kazwini makes the same statement respecting Kumar but he refers to Ibn Fakiyah as his authority. He adds [that wine-drinkers were punished by having a hot iron placed on their bodies and kept there till it got cold. Many died under the infliction. E. D., Vol. I, p. 13 and note 2

5 Kitabu-l Masalik wa-l Mamalik Tr. E. D., Vol. p. 13; Abu Zaid also records in connection with the country of Kumar that "The inhabitants abstain from licentiousness and from all sorts of wine," E.D., Vol. I, p. 8

It is interesting to note that Kshatriyas had no such religious scruple as to abstain from wine, but all the same most of them abstained from it and do now abstain from drink (wine) like the Sisodias of Mewar.¹ Ibn Khurdadba's observation that Ketarias (Kshatriyas) were allowed to drink not more than three cups, but the Brahmans were total abstainers.² His observation in connection with the Kshatriyas seems to be a strange one. The Vaisyas, then as now, were total abstainers though there must have been many exceptions.³ While writing about India, Merchant Sulaiman also observes that "They do not take wine, nor do they take vinegar which is made of wine. This does not arise from religious but from their disdain of it"⁴ He further mentions that the Indians say that "The prince who drink, wine is no true king."⁵ for as there are frequent wars with the neighbouring states, how should a

1 M. H. I., Vol. II, p. 185

2 Kitabu-l Masalik Wa-l Mamalik, Tr. E. D., Vol. I, p. 16. The same author writes that the kings and the people of Hind regard fornication as lawful, and wine as unlawful. This opinion prevails tkroughout Hind (Ibid. p. 13). But here he observes that three cups were allowed to Kshatriyas. It appears that Kshatriyas refer to ordinary Kshatriyas and not to the ruling families.

3 We find a change in the code of drinking wine in 12th Century A. D. The Sukranitisara allows moderate drinking on the ground that it develops talent, sharpens intelligence, increase patience and makes a mind steady : (ed. Culcatta) 1. 116-17; Lakshmidhara, prohibits the Brahmans from drinking spirituous liquors from gur or fermented rice or from honey but permits the kings and Vaisyas to drink these for vigour or during festivities. Niyatakala kanda, p. 831

4 Salsilatu-t Tawarikh, Tr E. D., Vol. I, p. 7; and see also Ancient Accounts of India and China, p. 83

5 Ibid., p. 7 and 33

drunkard manage the affairs of his kingdom.”¹ Merchant Sulaiman’s above statement finds its support from Bhatta Bhavadeva, the King of Bengal, who prohibited the use of wine for all of his subjects.²

But even then we find evidences to show that wine was freely used by certain classes of men and women in the Hindu society. Probably, the Muslim travellers were misguided by some of the kings of India who considered the use of wine unawful. But, side by side, we find numerous references when wine was used in large quantity. The Sukranitisara permits moderate drinking for the maintenance of sound health; to sharpen the intelligence and to make the mind steady.³ Laksmidhara, however, did not permit the Brahmans to drink spirituous liquors made from gur or fermented rice or honey.⁴ At the same time it allows the kings and Vaisyas to use the same on the occasion of festivity.⁵ But according to Manasollasa a king was not allowed to drink but on certain occasions such as marriages, ceremonies etc. and could entertain the ladies of the harem as well with wine.⁶ Al Masudi who visited Cambay about the middle of the tenth century A.D. also records that Indians sometimes make girls drink in order to show their mirth so that the beholder may be ins-

1 Ancient Accounts of India and China by two Mohammadan travellers who went to those parts in the 9th century (translated into English by Renaudot, London, 1733), p. 33, and see also E. D., Vol. I, p. 7

2 Bhavadevabhattacharya : Prayaschita-prakarana, edited by Girisa Chandra Vedantatirtha, pub : Virendra Research Society, Rajasthan, 1927, p. 40ff

3 Sukranitisara (ed. Cal.) I., pp. 276—285

4 Niyatakalakanda, p. 331

5 Ibid., p. 331

6 Dvyasrayakavya of Hemchandra, Vol. I, p. 13

pired with gaiety by their merriments.¹ It was also commonly found that on certain occasions drinks were also offered to the guests and invitied.²

Thus, it is quite clear that most of the Muslim travellers record and praise the Indians for not being fond of drinking wine. But it is not always true because our contemporary literary evidences show that drinking was partially used by the Indians-men, women and even by the kings³ *U8(P28).2191892* *MO*

The statement of Al Masudi who personally visited Cambay (943-955) certainly corroborates the fact that at least on some occasions Indians made girls drink in order to excite them to show their joviality to their beholders in order to inspire them with mirth and finery.⁴ This statement also finds support from Bana who describes similar type of jovial ceremony held on the occasion of the birth-festival of Harsha.⁵ Although Bana was not present on the occasion which he narrated but it must have been a usual feature during his time. And no doubt the same custom prevailed with some modifications till the time of Al Masudi who personally visited Cambay in about the middle of the tenth century A.D.

While writing about India, Merchant Sulaiman also observes that "They do not take wine, nor do they take vinegar which is made of wine. This does not arise

1 S. M. H. Nainar : Arab Geographers' knowledge of Southern India p. 102

2 B. P. Majumdar : op. cit., p. 360

3 For further study see Ibid. pp. 360-61

4 S. M. H. Nainar, op. cit., page 102

5 Harshacharita, (Tr. Cowell) pp. 112-14

from religious scruples, but from their disdain of it.”¹ He further mentions that Indians say “The prince who drinks wine is not true king,”² for “as there are frequent wars with neighbouring states, how should a drunkard manage the affairs of his kingdom.”³

It is also evident from the statements of the Arab travellers that, though not completely, the Brahmins were generally abstainers from flesh. Al Masudi observes that they (Brahmins) do not eat flesh of any animal.⁴ The provisions of later Smritis show that Brahmins were not in the habit of using flesh generally; but Vyasa observes that Brahmins invited to a Sraddha or sacrifice must eat flesh, otherwise they would fall into perdition.⁵ But for a Brahmin, and even a Kshatriya or Vaisya there was a general prohibition to kill or to eat flesh.⁶ It is also peculiar to note that some of the sub-castes of Brahmins and other castes of the northern India still eat flesh. The Brahmins were also not to drink the milk of any animal except the cow and the she-Buffalo; not to eat onions and such other vegetables. Hence Al Masudi's observations may be treated as correct in that eating of flesh by Brahmins was not a common feature among them.

Merchant Sulaiman, describing the food of the saints

1 Salsilatu-t Tawarikh' Tr. E. D. Vol. I; And see also, Ancient Accounts of India and China, p. 33

2 Ibid., page 7 and page 33

3 Ancient Accounts of India and China

4 Murujul Zahab- Tr. E. D., Vol. I, p. 19

5 M H I., Vol- II, page 185

6 Ibid., page 186

and yogis of India, who generally lived in mountains and jungles, says that sometimes they have nothing to eat but herbs and the fruits of the forest. Al Idrisi gives a more correct picture of the people of Naharwala and about their food. He mentions that "they live upon rice, peas, beans, haricots, lentils, mash, fish, and animals that have died a natural death, for they never kill winged or other animals".¹ The use of rice has been especially mentioned by the Arab travellers.

Ibn Haukal also mentions the names of the various Indian fruits available in various parts of the country. He writes that in Mansura the climate is hot and "there is neither grape, nor apple, nor ripe date (tamr), nor walnut in it." But he says that sugar cane grows there. He also mentions a fruit of the size of the apple "which is called Laimun, and is exceedingly acid." The place also yields a fruit called ambaj (mango). The place is cheap and prices are low and there is an abundance of food². He also found the western coastal regions producing mangoes, coco-nuts, lemons, and rice in great abundance and honey in great quantities.³ Similarly, Kasdar is also a cheap place, "where pomegranates, grapes, and other pleasant fruits are met with in abundance."⁴ Ibn Masah of the tenth century also mentions that rice and cow's milk served as the main items in Gujarat.⁵ From the same writer we also learn that rice and milk were

1 Nuzhatu-l Mushtak, Tr- E. D., Vol. I, page 88

2 E. D., Vol. I, page 35

3 Ibid., page 38; See also E. D., Vol. I, p. 27

4 Ibid., page 39

5 As quoted by Majumdar A. K. : Chaulukyās of Gujarat (1965) : page 354

considered to be very healthy food.¹ Not only this but also rice was the principal food of the people of Kashmir as well as of Uttar Pradesh,² And the Indians believed that the diet consisting exclusively of rice and cow's milk was beneficial for the maintenance of a sound and prolonged life. It was also useful for good complexion.³ Testifying to the same views Marco Polo, in the last decade of the thirteenth century (C.1293 A. D.), narrates the naked ascetics of Gujarat who ate nothing but a little rice and milk and lived long upto the age of—150 or 200 years.⁴

Dress : The Arab travellers also mention that under the influence of Arab rulers, the dresses of the inhabitants of Sindh were also changed. Al Istakhri writes that the dress of the people of Mansura "is like that of the people of Irak, but the dress of their kings resembles that of the kings of India in respect of the hair and the tunic."⁵ This observation has been confirmed by the statement of Ibn Haukal whos ubstitutes only trousers for hair.⁶ Ibn Haukal further describes about the dresses of the various places of the country. Writing about the people spread over from Cambay to Saimur, our traveller writes that the Muslims and infidels wear the same dresses and let their beards grow in the same fasion.⁷ He also writes that the people of Multan dress in the same way.⁸ In Mekran all wear

1 Ibid., p. 354

2 B. P. Majumdar : op. cit., pp. 257-8

3 A. K. Majumdar, op, cit., p. 354

4 Quoted by B. P. Majnmdar op. cit., p. 383

5 Abu Ishak Al Istakhri's Kitabu-l Akalim, Tr, E. D., Vol. I, p. 27

6 E. D., Vol. I, p. 35

7 Ibid., p, 39

8 Ibid.

short tunics except the merchants who wear shirts and cloaks of cotton like the men of Irak and Persia.¹ The Muslim influence on the dresses of the people of these places as mentioned by Ibn Haukal is obviously due to the long Arab rule and their settlement over these places. And it would not be surprising if our this traveller had found Muslim dresses very common in these areas. Similarly, relying on Ibn Haukal, many, hold that the people of the Gulf of Cambay and Malabar cost wore 'izr and mizr' after the fashion of the Muslim settled there. This has led them to believe that men, perhaps after the fashion of the Muslims, wore shorts and Jackets.² But it does not seem to be a correct estimate holds Dr. A. K. Majumdar who, on the authority of one of the coins of Chandragupta³ I, says that the Indians did not borrow this dress from the Muslims.⁴ He further says that one of the coins of Chandragupta I clearly shows him wearing a close fitted coat and short-trousers. From this he says that the Indians had been using those two articles of dress long before the birth of Islam. And most probably trousers and jackets were copied from the Central Asian Sakas or the Kushans.⁵

Ibn Haukal describing about the people of the land of Balhara (Cambay to Saimpur) further writes that the Muslim and infidels both in this tract wear the same dresses. and let their beard's hair grow in the same fashion. They use fine

1 Ibid., p. 39

2 As quoted by A. K. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 255 and footnote 64

3 Allan : Catalogue of Gupta Coins, 43

4 A. K. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 356

5 Ibid.,

Muslim garments on account of extreme heat. The men of Multan dress in the same way.¹ Apparently it seems that no trousers were worn and people in the Duccan and the Punjab continued the use of the two Dhoties or pieces of cloth of ancient times.² He mentions further that in Mekran (Persian border) they use Persian and Makranic dresses. All wear short tunics except the merchants who wear shirts and cloaks of cotton like the men of Irak and Persia.³ It is quite clear from the above descriptions that Muslim dresses were very common among the people of Sindh, Multan and Mausura. It was not surprisng, at all because the places were occupied by the Arabs early in the 8th century A. D. and it was due to their long rule that the dresses of the people were changed completely.

Ornaments : Arab travellers seem to be much impressed by the Indian ornaments. Merchant Sulaiman and Abu Zaid of the nineth century A. D. have mentioned of gold bracelets, of precious stones used by both men and women of India; precious ear-rings and collars were also worn by the kings and the high ranked persons of the courts.⁴

Abu Zaid describing about the ornaments used by the kings records that "they (the kings of the Indies) wear also collars of great price, adorned with precious stones of diverse colours, but especially green and red; yet pearls are what

1 E. D., Vol. I, p. 39

2 M. H. I., Vol. II, p. 187

3 E. D., Vol. I, p. 39

4 Ancient Accounts of India and China, p. 36

they most esteem; and their value surpasses that of all other jewels. The grandees of their court, the great officers and captains wear the like jewels in their colours.”¹ It is also obvious from the writings of Al Idrisi that the use of gold and silver was also a common feature among the women in those days.² He specially mentions rings of gold and the silver being popularly used by the ladies upon their feet and hands.³

There is no reason to disbelieve the account of these travellers. But it is a pity that even these travellers are not clear enough regarding other Indian ornaments which found mention in some Indian literary and sculptural works.

The description of the ear-rings of the nobles is also correct. Its use continued even up to the time of the peshwas, and large ear-rings shown in the picture of Nana phadanvis generally testify it. The use of the golden ear-rings appears to have been prescribed to every Hindu house-holder and this custom still prevails in most of the places.⁴ Similarly, the use of pearl necklace was common among both men and women.⁵ Rajasekhara a well known writer narrates the story of a pearly necklace purchased by a Kanauj Emperor of the previous Varma dynasty in

1 Ancient Accounts of India and China, pp. 98-99; similarly we find in passage of the translation of Abu Zaid in E. D., Vol. I, P. II, that “The kings of India are accustomed to wear ear-ring of precious stones, mounted in gold. They also wear necklace of great value formed of the most precious red and green stones. Pearls, however, are held in the highest esteem, and greatly sought after.”

2 E. D., Vol. I, p. 88

3 Ibid.

4 M. H. I., Vol. II, p. 187

5 Ibid., p. 188

his drama, which also lends support to the Arab travellers testimony.¹

Many ornaments are also referred to in the Deopara inscription of Vijayasena and the Naihati plate of Vallalasena which have not been mentioned by the Arab Travellers. The former seems to have been referred to jewels, ear-rings, necklaces, gold bracelets and anklets.²

The terracotta figures discovered at Rajghat (Varanasi) confirm as to how the hair of women were tied with pearl festoons.³ Some literary works, such as Ramcharita,⁴ Samayamatrika,⁵ Trisastisalakapurusacharita,⁶ Naisadhacharita,⁷ and Rajatarangini,⁸ refer different types of ornaments, which appear to be in use among the people of those days. But even these are also not mentioned by the Arab travellers.

Al Utbi of the early eleventh century A. D., who wrote his celebrated book Tarikh-i-Yamini, mentions a necklace which was taken off the neck of Jaipal of the Shahi dynasty in 1001 A. D. According to him the necklace was composed of large pearls and shining gems and rubies in gold of which the value was two hundred thousand dinars. And many other ornaments were also

1 Ibid., p. 188

2 Deopara Ins. Verse II in Inscriptions of Bengal, Vol. III, by N.G. Majumdar

3 Journal of the U. P. Historical Society, XIV. 4

4 R. C., III, pp. 33-34

5 Samayamatrika, VII, p. 14, 15

6 Trisastisalakapurusacharita, I, 229

7 Naisadhacharita, I, 38, VII, 80, IX, 104-116, XV. ३३

8 R. T., VIII, 2833, 2835

taken away from the necks of his relatives who were either killed or taken prisoners.¹ The statement of Firishta, who though is a much later historian, also corroborates the views of Al Utbi. As also he mentions that sixteen necklaces were captured by Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni after his victory over Jaipal.²

The use of necklace of great value adorned with the most precious red and green stones may be seen even in those days round the necks of the Indian princes. The Khajuraho sculptures clearly speak that Keyura, nupura and graivyeka necklaces were extensively used. O. C. Gangoli, however, has pointed out that these sculptures show the wearing of various kinds of ornaments by ladies on their fore-head, arms, wrists and ears.³ Hemachandra mentions in his work, Desinamamala,⁴ the names of the various ornaments, viz., rings necklace, and head-ornament called chatvaso. Among all the ornaments, ratnaSudala was also a favourite ornament which was mostly used in Bengal.⁵

The Arab travellers have made reference to pearls also, which were held highly among the Indian ornaments in those days. Pearly necklaces were worn both by men and women.

Besides these ornaments, there were certain other ornaments which have not been described by the Arab travellers. The ullarayam made of cowries and Tagnam, a bracelet made of strings as used by poorer people

1 Tarikh-i-Yamini, Tr. E. D., Vol. II. p. 26

2 B. F., Vol. I, p. 38

3 Art of the Candelas, Plates 10, 11, 19, 22 and 30

4 Desinamamala III. 8

5 Kramrisch S. Pata and Sena Sculptures, Fig. 39

are also mentioned in some contemporary literary works.¹ It is peculiar to note here that the nose ornament (nosering),² usually made of precious pearls and worn by married Indian women, does not find mention in the accounts of the Arab travellers. Similarly the omission of the toe-ring is also conspicuous. It is very surprising to note that these two ornaments, which are very important upto this time and regarded as a singn of saubhaya or married bliss, could not catch the eyes of the Aarb travellers. The ommission of the toe-ring may have been accidental, as it was not a very prominent or valuable ornament,³ but the nose-ring is very important and even today every bride uses it at the time of her marraige. This is still more surprising to note that not only the Arab travellers have failed to mention it but also the literary sources, sculptors and painters do not describe or illustrate the nose-ring and toe-ring.⁴ It is believed that nose-ring was not known throughout the whole of the entire Hiudu period.⁵ It is, therefore, very likely that these have been borrowed from the Muhammadans here-afterwards⁶ who (Arabs) probably borrowed it from the Herbews, as has been mentioned in the old Testament.⁷

1 Desinamamala, I, 110: V. I

2 It is also called as natha, nathia, or nathini etc.

3 Dr. A. S. Altekar: The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, 1956, p. 301

4 Ibid., p. 301

5 Ibid., p. 302. "Hindu Sculptures of Puri and Rajputana of the post-Muslim period and mural paintings in the Padmanabhasvami temple at Trivendrum of the 14th century begin to show the nose-ring from the 13th Century. "Ibid, p. 302

6 Ibid., p. 392: M. H. I., Vol. II, p. 188

7 Dr. A. S. Altekar, Op. Cit., p. 303; New Indian Antiquary, 1943—4, p. 25

The high degree of skill attained by the jewellers is simply testified by the intricate designs manifested on the necklaces and ear-rings in Khujuraho sculptures. Parvati and Lakshmi wear a necklace arranged in rectangular stabs. An Apsara with mirror in the Kandariya Mahadeo temple wears a tyre-shaped necklace and the Flying Deva in the Duladeo temple is seen with a necklace whose rectangular blocks are long.¹ As regards ear-ornaments, the Apsara of the Parsvanath temple wears a heavy ornament, where a bud appears below the ear and below the bud a sun-flower-like ear-ring hangs. The Apsara with a mirror in the Kali temple has an ear-ring which is a round pressed square-block. Another Apsara with a scorpion in the Kandariya Mahadeo temple has an ear-ring whose flowers are entwined.² We also find in the Tishashtisalakapurushacharita where Hemchandra mentions atleast fourteen various ornaments which were suitable for a women.³ It is obvious from the writings of Hemchandra that the ornaments in the list submitted by him must have been very common at the time he wrote his book. The Arab travellers have mentioned only a few of them and failed to discover various other Indian ornaments worn by both men and women at that time.

1 The Socio-Economic History of Northern India, p. 209

2 Ibid., p. 209

3 V. I, p. 229. The list of fourteen ornaments given by the translator is as follows : (1) Neck-lace (2) Short or half necklace, (3) Ear-ring (4) Gold (bracelet), (5) Jewel (necklace or bracelet), (6) String of pearls, (7) Armlets, (8) Anklets, (9) Another kind of bracelet' (10) Ring, (11) Ear-ring, (12) Pearl-necklace, (13) Crest-jewel, (14) Tilika.

Pardah : According to Abu Zaid "Most of the princes of India, when they hold a court, allow their women to be seen by the men who attend it, whether they be natives or foreigners. No veil conceals them from the eyes of the visitors."¹ The traveller, according to C. V. Vaidya, seems to be misled in his observation.² He further holds that this system, however, might have been true of the princes of Malabar and the South, for there has been no pardah among them either in ancient or modern times.³ It is also interesting to note that even in the northern India Pardah was never observed strictly by all the oastes. The term Pardah literally means a curtain or something to screen off; popularly it applies to veil.⁴ And for the developement of Parhah in India we find contradictory statements. Some hold that the Muslims are responsible for its growth in India, and before the introduction of Islam, the Indian women went about freely.⁵ But others are of the opinion that this custom is of immemorial antiquity which has been supported by many illustrations from ancient Hindu Social History.⁶ In

1 E. D., Vol. I, p. 11

2 M. H. I., Vol. II, p. 188

3 M. H. I., Vol. II, p. 188

4 Compare K. M. Ashraf 'Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan'. p. 138 and K. M. Yusuf's An article on 'Muslim Women and Pardah', Amrita Bazar Patrika, Puja Annual Number 1961, p. 125

5 Compare Cooper (Miss) Elizabeth 'The Harim and the Pardah', London 1915., p 102

6 Compare the opinion of Mr. Mehta in an article on 'Pardah', in the Leader, Allahabad, May 1928 ; M H I Vol. II, p: 188; S. M. Jaffar's (Some Cultural Aspects of Muslim Rule in India), pp: 197—201; and 'Ancient Hindu Polity', by N. N. Law, p. 144, A S Altekar, Op; Cit., p. 174

fact, there was partial exclusion of women in Ancient India and women observed a curtain or 'Veil,'¹ the so called 'Ghoonghat' of the modern times.² The present elaborate and institutionalised form of Pardah, according to Dr. K. M. Ashraf, dates back from the time of the Muslim rule.³

But the custom of 'Veil' or 'Ghoongat' does not mean complete seclusion of the women in earlier days. Ramayana also records that the appearance of women in the open was not objectionable on the occasions of marriage, festivity, sacrifice, and public calamity.⁴ There are many other instances, too, in our ancient religious and literary books which clearly speak that the women in those periods went about freely without any 'Veil'⁵ But the observation of the traveller as to the appearance of the women in the open courts of northern India can be accepted only with a grain of salt for the custom of some sort of Pardah prevailed in this country since the early ages.⁶ It appears, according to C. V. Vaidya, that "the traveller was misled by the presence of the female

1 K. M. Ashraf, op. cit., p. 139 : But 'Veil' is mentioned as a mark of nobility in the Harsha-Charita of Bana Act; 1, Scene 3

2 K. M. Ashraf, op. cit., p. 139; 'Some Cultural Aspects of Muslim rule in India p. 202. In ancient India there was partial seclusion of women, but among the poor it was quite unknown. See K. M. Yusuf's article on 'Muslim Women and Pardah,' Amrit Bazar Patrika, Puja Annual Number, 1961, p. 126

3 K. M. Ashraf, op. cit., p. 139

4 A. S. Altekar's op. cit., p. 178

5 For its evidences, see Ibid., pp. 168-178

6 There are ample reasons to endorse that except for the few persons Pardah system in Ancient India, was quite unknown. See A. S. Altekar, op. cit., pp. 166-179

attendants of the kings who always attended upon him even in open court as described by Bana.”¹ He further observes that “The king’s wives and queens could not have appeared in open court in the north of India or even in Maharashtra.”² Disagreeing with it Dr. A. S. Altekar argues that neither in the ancient religious books nor in the old Sanskrit dramas we find any trace of the Pardah system.³ Even “Yuan Chuange has given an intimate picture of the Hindu society of the 7th century A. D., but he no where refers to the Parda system. We learn from him that Rajyasri, the widowed sister of of Harsha, used to come out without a veil in her brother’s court.”⁴ Similarly, Rajatarangini, another important work which deals with the detailed history of the court and the life of the people of Kashmir from 700 to 1150 A. D., gives no reference of any Pardah system prevailing there. Subsequent to it many Sanskrit dramas do not testify to the Pardah system at all. The plots of the Sakuntala and the Malati-Madhava do suggest that there were no pardah system being strictly observed; so is the case with Bana’s Kadambari.⁵ We also learn that girls were often educated with boys. The references of various marriages are also there. Not only this but it has also been found when youths moved in the company of their sweet hearts to enjoy shows and sports together.⁶ Even in the early medieval India the

1 M. H. I., Vol. II, p. 183

2 Ibid. p. 188

3 A. S. Altekar; op. cit., p. 172

4 Ibid.; p. 172

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., pp. 166-67

Chach-Nama, which narrates the history of the Sindh from the usurpation of the Brahman Chach to the Arab conquest of Sindh, also shows that Indian women upto that time did not observe Pardah. The Chach-Nama thus writes that after the defeat and death of king Dahir of Sindh his queen Rani Bai collected some of the generals and prepared for fight in 712 A. D. She personally renewed the army in the fort and fifteen thousand warriors were thus collected. And thus she bravely defended the fort against the on-slaughts of the Arab forces under Muhammad bin Kasim.¹ Similarly, Naiki Devi taking her infant son Mularaja I into her lap fought gallantly and crushed the armies of Islam under the famous general Shahab-ud-din in the open field of battle in 1178 A. D.² An inscription of Bhima's reign also states that during the reign of Mularaja even a woman could defeat Hammira.³ It is also interesting to note that some of the Chandella queens took keen interest in the public affairs.⁴ It is also referred that some ladies of the royal house hold took some part in the administration during the rule of the Gahadavala Dynasty.⁵ All these would not have been possible if the Pardah system were observed in the society.

1 Chach-Nama, E. D., Vol. I, p. 172

2 A. K. Majumdar, op. cit., pp. 131-132, 135 and 136

3 A collection of Prakrit and Sanskrit Inscriptions Published by the Bhavanagar Archaeological Department, with an introduction by P. Peterson, 1895, 210. V. 29

4 Dr. S. K. Mitra : The Early Rulers of Khajuraho, 1958, p. 177

5 Miss. Roma Niyogi : The History of the Gahadavala Dynasty, 1969, p. 228

Dr. Altekar is of the opinion that the adoption of the Pardah system by the ruling aristocratic families of Hindu community is subsequent to the advent of the Muslim rule. "It was accepted by the Hindu society partly in imitation of the manners of the conquerors, and partly as an additional protection for the women folk."¹ "The times were unsettled; there was a general feeling of insecurity and Hindu life and honour did not count for much in the eyes of the conquerors. The Pardah afforded some additional protection to beautiful women while out on journey from the covetousness of an unscrupulous soldiery."² Therefore, the Hindu women, to whom the sexual morality had some meaning, gladly embraced the Pardah system and began to observe strictly in order to save their honour, and to protect themselves from the voluptuous eyes of the Muslims.

However, in northern India, which was the scene of the regular Muslim marauders and their brutality, and which witnessed the Muslim rule for a very long time, the Pardah system began to take its rigid form comparatively earlier. But in the Deccan, the Muslim influence was still superficial and so the Pardah system got no footing in Hindu society there.³

An interesting instance can be quoted here about the custom of Purdah. Fakhru-ud-din Mubarak Shah relates an amusing story of a Hindu slave girl of Behram

1 The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, p. 175. The Pardah was observed in the Muslim ruling families so strictly, that a message had to pass through three intermediaries before it could reach the desired person in Zanana or Harams, J. A. S. B., 1935, p. 249

2. A. S. Altekar : Op, cit., p. 175

3 Ibid., p. 175

Shah, the Ghaznavide ruler of Lahore, at the beginning of the Muslim rule in India. Once she fell ill and was to be treated by a physician. The case was reported to the monarch who was very much upset to hear the news and only after many convincing arguments did he agree to the physician's viewing her face and arms from a considerable distance.¹ But this happened in a Muslim court and it cannot be treated as an instance of Pardah prevailing among the Hindus, although the slave girl in question was a Hindu. But the observation of Abu Zaid, that in most of the courts of northern India queens appeared in public without any veil, somehow testifies to the views quoted above. However, if the Pardah system was prevailing at all during this time, it might have been confined to a very small section of the ruling and some other classes.

Self Immolation² : The Arab travellers also refer to the custom of royal servants of the kings who used to sacrifice their lives for their masters or burn themselves at their death. Abu Zaid records a very peculiar custom that "some of the king of India, when they ascend the throne, have a quantity of rice cooked and served on banana leaves. Attached to the king's person are three or four hundred champions, who have joined him of their own free will without compulsion. When the king has eaten some of the rice, he gives it to his companions. Each in his turn approaches, takes a small

1 Adab-ul-Harb of Fakhr Mudabbir, 20, British Museum.

2 For detail see, The History of Suicide in India. An Introduction, by Upendra Thakur, 1963, Chapter III, pp. 45—125

quantity and eats it. All those who so eat the rice are obliged, when the king dies, or is slain, to burn themselves to the very last man on the very day of the king's decease. This is a duty which admits of no delay."¹ He further writes that "when a person, either woman or man, becomes old, and the senses are enfeebled, he begs some one of his family to throw him into the fire, or to drown him in the water; so firmly are the Indians persuaded that they shall return to (life upon) the earth."² It appears from the records of the ruling dynasties of southern India, like the Cholas, the Chalukyas, and the Hoysalas that they retained suicide-squads in their service who were called Garudas.³ The epigraphic records of the Hoysalas especially are full of references to these men.⁴ Perhaps the most vivid and remarkable of such records is a pillar in Hoysalashvara temple at Halebid, in which a thousand Garudas headed by prince Lakshma are depicted taking their own lives in various ways by the sword and the dagger and by head swinging after the death of the king Ballala II. The Prince Lakshma was his prime minister. The institution is known to have existed in Madura among the Pandya kings.⁵

Although, the custom stated above by the Arab travellers is based on facts, figures, conditions and history, the derivation of the name still remains a puzzle. It

1 E. D., Vol. I, p. 9; Renaudot and Reinaund refer this to the Nairs of Malabar, *ibid.*, p. 9 and note 1

2 E. D., Vol. I, pp. 9-10

3 S. H. Hodivala's *Study in Indo-Muslim History*; Vol. II, p. 2

4 Rice, *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol. V 71-74

5 *Archaeological Report on Epigraphy (Madras)*, 1918 Part II, para 43; K. A. N. Shastri, *Pandya Kingdom*, 19

appears that these people were called 'Velaikkaran', that is, 'men who were bound by a covenant'.¹ The Arabs seem to have casually picked up this word by the ear and then shaped it as foreigners often do in their own way into *balanjaria* (from Persian word 'Biranj' for 'rice') which is a symbol of the sacrament.² It is also believed that these persons were called as 'Jolikkara', because they received their remuneration in Foli or Choham, that is, 'millet'.³

However, the practice of committing suicide among the men are found common during this period. The *Dvyasrayakavya*, gives us the earliest reference of Chalukya Mularaja I, who mounted the funeral pyre at Sidhapur on the banks of the river Saraswati in A.D. 996.⁴ The next instance is that of the Chandella king Dhanga who having lived successfully for more than 100 years, drowned himself in the Ganges at Prayaga sometime after 1002 A. D.⁵ The following year Jaipal the Shahi ruler of the Punjab also sacrificed his life on a funeral pyre after he had suffered successive defeats at the hands of the Mlecchhas.⁶ The Kalachuri king Gangeyadeva also committed suicide at Prayaga along with his one

1 Dr. Venkataramannayya's article, in the *Journal of Oriental Research*, Vol. XIV, part II

2 *Studies in Indo-Muslim History*, Vol. II, p. 3

3 Dr. Venkataramannayya's article, in the *Journal of Oriental Research*, Vol. XIV, part II; K. A. N. Shastri, *Cholas*, II, 225, and authorities quoted there.

4 *Dvyasrayakavya of Hemchandra*, VI, verses 100—107. IA. IV, III. A different version is given in the *Prabandhachintamani*, Tr. Tawney, p. 2

5 E. I., 1. 14

6 D. H. N. I, Vol. I, p. 87

hundred wives sometime between 1034 and 1041 A. D.¹ Similarly, in A. D. 1068, the Chalukya king Somesvara I Ahavamalla sacrificed his life in Tungabhadra after performing yogic rites.²

Abu Zaid records that "when a person, either woman or man, becomes old, and the senses are enfeebled, he begs some one of his family to throw him into the fire or to drown him in the water; so firmly are the Indians persuaded that they shall return to (life upon) the earth. In India they burn the dead."³ He also describes that "In the states of Balhara, and other provinces of India, one may see men burn themselves on a pile. This arises from the faith of the Indians in the metempsychosis, a faith which is rooted in their hearts and about which they have not the slightest doubt."⁴ The various instances of self-immolation has been further supported by Mahmud Gardizi who composed his famous book 'Kitab Zain-ul-Akbar' in the middle of the eleventh century A.D. But he, in a very peculiar way, describes a heroic fashion of self-sacrifice.⁵ Al Beruni also refers to the banyan tree of Prayaga through which Brahmans and Kshatriyas were in habit of committing suicide by climbing up the tree and throwing themselves into the Ganges.⁶ Al Beruni writes that persons willing to commit suicide or to kill themselves, sometimes "hire somebody to drown them

1 E. I. II. 4, XII. 211, XXI. 94; J. A.S. B- XXI. 116

2 Socio-Economic History of Northern India, p- 362

3 E- D-, Vol- I, pp- 9-10

4 E. D., Vol. I, p, 9

5 As noticed by B. P. Majumdar, op. cit., pp. 364-366

6 A. I., Vol. II, pp. 179-171

in the Ganges, keeping them under water till they are dead.”¹ However ‘burning oneself, according to the same authority “is forbidden to Brahmans and Kshatriyas by a special law.”² It is evident from the description of the Arab travellers that myth is an old custom which prevailed in those days. But, as the practice of suicide in Hindus was considered sinful,³ the occasions of these instances must have been rare.

Al Idrisi states that “the people of India burn their dead and do not raise tombs for them.”⁴ He adds further that “in all the countries of Hind and Sind there are Musalmans and they bury their dead secretly by night in their houses, but like the Indians they do not give way to long lamentations.”

Sense of Justice : The Indians always bore a high moral character for probity with the foreigners right from the centuries before the Christ. Al Idrisi, speaking of the people between Cambay and Naharwala mentions that “The Indians are naturally inclined to justice, and never depart from it in their actions. Their good faith, honesty and fidelity to their engagements are well known, and they are so famous for these qualities that people flock to their country from every side; hence the country

1 Ibid., p 170

2 A. I., Vol. II, p. 170

3 Manu and other Dharmasastras condemn suicide in severest terms, (Manu V, 89; Parasara IV, 1, 2). But the Mahabharata permits one to end his life at a sacred place like Prithudaka, by the holy Himalayas and Prayaga. History of Dharmasastra by P. V. Kane, in 5 Vols. Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, II, p. 88

4 E. D., Vol. I, p. 88

5 Ibid., p. 89

is flourishing and their condition prosperous.”¹ Abu Zaid also attests it in his writings in the following words that “The kingdom of Sarandib has a law, and its doctors assemble from time to time like as among us the men assemble who collect the traditions of the Prophet. The Indians go to the doctors, and write from their dictation the lives of the prophets, and the precepts of the law.....
.....There is a numerous colony of jews in Sarandib, and people of other religions, especially Manicheans. The king allows each sect to follow its own religion. Great licentiousness prevails in this country among the women as well as the men.”²

Al Idrisi further informs us that the Indians were kind enough not only towards the strangers alone, but also had a great respect for animals as well, especially for oxen. And speaking of the people of Gujarat, the Arab writer tells us that “The inhabitants of Naharwara live upon rice, peas, bears, horicots, lentils, mash, fish, and animals that have died a natural death, fo they never kill winged or other animals. They have a great veneration for oxen, and by a privilege confined to the species, they inter them after death. When these animals are feebled by age, and are unable to work, they free them from all labour and provide them with food without expecting any return.”³ It is obvious from the writings of Al Idrisi that the Indians bore a high character and led a very simple life and especially the people of Gujarat were different in their character from the other

1 E. D., Vol. I, p. 88

2 Ibid., p. 10

3 E. D., Vol. I, p. 88

parts of the country. In the matter of religion also, the Hindu Kings were noted for their generosity and accorded full liberty to other religions as shown by Abu Zaid himself.¹ At the result of the commercial intercourse between the Arabs and the Western coasts of India, many Arab colonies were established thereafter even before the birth of Islam. These Arab colonies were naturally converted into Islam after the conversion of the whole of Arabia into the new faith. And soon after many mosques were erected in the Arab colonies of India. It goes to the credit of the Indian Kings that they never objected to this religious activities of the Muslims even after they had during this period created great havoc in the country. Instead, they accorded the Muslims every facility to prosecute their religion.² Muhammad Ufi, the celebrated Muslim historian, records that incited by some Parsis, some Hindus at Cambay destroyed a mosque and killed in the part about eighty Muslims. The reigning Hindu king Sidharaja (1094—1143 A. D.) being informed of the fact atonce rushed to the spot and punished those found guilty.³ He also gave one lac of Balotras to rebuild their mosque.⁴ And Khalib Ali, the reader of the Khutba, who had escaped and fled to Naharwala to complain the king Sidharaja, was also granted four articles of dress.⁵ The famous Muslim historian Muhammad Ufi was so much impressed that he wrote on this episode

1 Ibid., p. 10

2 A. K. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 331; Dr. Tara Chand : Influence of Islam on Indian Culture, 1963, p. 44

3 For detail see Muhammad Ufi in E. D. Vol. II, pp. 162-164

4 E. D., Vol. II, p. 164

5 E. D., Vol. II, p. 164

that he had "never heard a story to be compared with this."¹ Such a sense of liberal attitude was not displayed by the kings alone but by the general inhabitants as well. We are told from the Jagaducharita that rich merchants had a mosque built for the use of the Muslims.² Some of the famous Indian inscriptions do refer the same religious toleration of the Hindus. The Veraval inscription of Arjunadeva records that an Indian Raja (Kula) Chahada paid the expenses of the mosque.³ We also find in Arabic inscription found in a mosque in Ahmedabad that this mosque was erected on 24th Rabi 1,445 A. H. (15th July 1053 A. D.).⁴ This and many other instances⁵ supply the fact that the Hindus, in general, were liberal, honest and just in their character at the time the Arab travellers visited to this country.

It has been a very common feature of the age for the Hindu Kings to be of noble and generous sentiment. Al Beruni, who visited India in the early eleventh century A. D. was highly impressed by high moral character of the Hindu Shahi dynasty of Kabul and Lahore. He thus writes about them that "We must say that, in all their grandeur, they never slackened in the ardent desire of doing that which is good and right and that they were men of noble sentiment and noble bearing."⁶ By their

1 E. D., Vol. II, p. 162

2 Jagaducharita. VI, 64. As quoted by A. K. Majumdar., op. cit., p. 331

3 A. K. Majumdar, Op, cit., p. 332

4 Dr. M. A., Chagtai: The Earliest Muslim Inscription in India from Ahmedabad. POIHC, 1939

5 A. K. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 332; I. A., XI, 241

6 A. I., Vol. II, p. 13

noble setiment the Rashtrakutas permitted the Muslims to build mosques within their dominion.¹ Al Masudi also testifies it and writes that "of all the kings of Sind and India, there is no one who pays greater respect to the Musalmans than the Balhara."² Later Al Idrisi of the eleventh century also testifies it.³

The language : The Arab travellers have frequently referred to about the language of the Indians. Al Masudi writes that the language of Sindh is different from that of India. The reason for this difference, according to him, is due to its nearness to the dominions of the Muslims.⁴ It is obvious that when Al Masudi visited India, Sindh and Multan formed the parts of the vast Muslim empire in the east. And due to this political annexation of Sindh and Multan, the Arabs (Muslims) settled down there in large numbers which not only affected the religious social and political life of the people but also made lasting impressions upon the tongue and language of the people. Arabic became their official language which naturally differed from the rest of India. This testimony of Al Masudi has also been confirmed by Iba Haukal who clearly mentions that the language of the people of Mausura, Multan and its nearby was both Arabic and Sindhi.⁵ Al Masudi writing about the people

1 E. D., Vol. I, p. 27 and 38. For Epigraphic evidence of this can be seen in Indian Archaeology, A Review, 1956-57, p. 40-1

2 Ibid., p. 88

3 Ibid., p. 17: the Jamiu-l Hikayat increases the number of religions in India to forty-eight, and the Dahjatu-l Tawarik in the Paris Library, sets them down as 943. As quoted in E. D., Vol. I, p. 17 and note 2

4 E. D., Vol. I, p. 24.

5 E. D., Vol. I, p. 39.

of Balhara states that "the inhabitants of Mankir, which is the capital of the Balhara, speak the kiriya language, which has this name from kira, the place where it is spoken."¹ This Mankir has been identified by Malkhed and the language called by him is probably kanarese.² Al Masudi also refers a "Lariya" being spoken by the people of "Saimur, Subara, Tana, and other towns" situated on the Sea Coast.³ The places mentioned by Al Masudi were no other than Thana, Chaul and Soppara. The language noticed by him "Lariya" was called after the See of Larissa (The Arabian Sea) on which these towns were situated. However, in Sanskrit Laria is called "Lata", the country about the mouth of the Narbada.⁴ The language as mentioned by Al Masudi may have been the early form of the Marathi language.⁵ Rashidu-d-Din is not very clear in his statements and he simply writes that the people of Malabar speak mixed language. This may be taken as a true picture because Malabar was one of the places where the Arab merchants had established their colonies even before the rise of Islam. Due to this, imigrants of the Arabs in that region they used their own Arabic language where as the Indian inhabitants of the same place used their own language. And no wonder if Rashidu-din has described their amixed language which

1. Ibid, p. 24.

2 Dr. S. Maqbool Ahmad; M. I. Q. op, cit., p. 105 : C. V. Vaidya thinks that the word Kiriya is the name coined by the Arabs for the Marathi language. M. H. I., Vol. II, p. 169

3 E. D., Vol. I, p. 24

4 M. I. Q., Op. cit., p, 105

5 Ibid., p. 105. According to C. V. Vaidya the language Lariya as noticed by Masudi has now merged or changed into the Gujarati language. M. H. I., Vol, II, p, 169

was mainly on account of the large number of foreign settlers there. But it is surprising to note that these travellers do not mention the names of Marathi and Gujarati languages which were quite popular and spoken on the coast of Thana and Sopara and above the Ghats at Malkhed.

Al Beruni who visited India early in the eleventh century A. D., also writes about the languages of India. According to him there were many languages which differed from each other.¹ He makes special reference of the Sanskrit language which he found most difficult to study.² This proves that the Sanskrit language which is the mother of all the languages was again occupied most important place among all the languages of the country. For, the period is noted for the creation of many Sanskrit literary works. But Al Beruni severely commented on the defects of the Sanskrit language³ which is natural phenomena for a foreigner to the Sanskrit language which is one of the most ancient languages of the world.

Dancing Girls : The Arab travellers also seem to have been impressed by the dancing girls who were highly proficient in the art of music and dance. These dancing girls were mostly attached with the temples at the time these travellers visited India. Abu Zaid who visited India in 867 A. D. states "In the Indies they have public women called Women of the idol, the origin

1 A. I., Vol. I, pp. 17-19

2 Ibid., p. 19

3 Ibid., pp. 17-19

of whose institution is such: when a woman has laid herself under a vow, that she may have children, if it happens that she brings forth a handsome daughter, she carries the child to the Bod, so they call the idol they worship, and there leave her. When the girl has attained a proper age, she takes an apartment in this public place, and spreads a curtain before her door, and awaits the arrival of strangers as well. Indians as men of other sects, to whom this debauchery is made lawful. She prostitutes herself at a certain rate, and delivers her gains into the hands of the idol's priest, to be by him disposed of for the use and support of the temple."¹ The author of *Hudud-ul-alam*, written in 928-983 A. D. records 30 dancing girls at a temple in Ramiyan, whose function was to dance round the image.² The number of dancing girls gradually increased thereafter. Dr. U. N. Ghoshal on the authority of the *Chau-Ju-Kua* states that in Gujarat there were 4000 temples in which over 20,000 dancing girls live whose function was to sing twice daily while offering food to the deities and while presenting flowers,³ Alone at the temple of Somnath in Gujarat there lived hundreds of dancing girls at the time of its destruction by Sultan Mahmud of Ghazani in 1025 A. D. At Kazwini who composed his book *Asaru-l Bilad* just after the middle of the thirteenth century (1263-1275 A. D.) records 500 damsels at the temple of Somnath whose duty was to sing and dance at the door.⁴ Dr. U. N. Ghoshal thinks that literary evidences and inscrip-

1 Ancient Accounts of India and China (1733 ed), p. 88

2 P. O- I. H. C., 1939, p. 667

3 The Struggle for Empire, pp. 495-96

4 E. D., Vol. I, p. 98

tions also give us the impression that they were regarded as the part of normal establishment of the temples.¹ Dr. B. P. Majumdar quotes various authorities to prove the same.² Al Beruni, however, records that the income obtained from the prostitution in the temples were used to be taken by the Kings to meet the expenses of the army.³ But Al Biruni's observation in this regard is very revealing when he writes about the people of India in his own words: "People think with regard to harlotry that it is allowed with them.In reality, the matter is not as people think, but it is rather this, that the Hindus are not very severe in punishing whoredom. The fault, however, in this lies with the kings, not with the nation. But for this, no Brahman or priest would suffer in their idol-temples the women who sing, dance, and play. The Kings make them an attraction for their cities, a bait of pleasure for their subjects, for no other but financial reasons. By the revenues which they drive from the business both as fines and taxes, they want to recover the expenses which their treasury has to spend on the army."⁴ Al Bernni's this statement finds full support from the Arthasastra according to which a prostitute had to pay $\frac{1}{15}$ th as royal share of her monthly income, and besides was liable of being heavily fined in case of specified offences.⁵ Not only this but she seemed to have been protected by the Kings

1 The Struggle For Empire, p. 495

2 B. P. Majumdar : Op. cit., p. 372

3 A. I., Vol. II, p. 157

4 A. I., Vol. II, p. 157

5 Arthasatra, Adhyakshaparchāra, Ch. XXVII

and if some one committed an offence against her, he had to pay even heavier fines.¹

Prostitution in northern India was a common feature of the Hindu Society in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.² And we definitely find that the medieval towns of India had a number of prostitutes.³ "Besides the regular prostitutes," writes Dr. B. P. Majumdar "there was another class of women called devadasis, who were attached to the temples from very old times."⁴ He further writes that during the course of four festivals "the people of all classes, young or old, male or female, were asked to give free expression to their pent-up sexual feelings."⁵ But Al Beruni's records also reveal the fact that the Brahmans were opposed to the institution of the dancing girls.⁶ But we are informed by two inscriptions of jojalladeva, of the Chahamana dynasty of Marwar dated Vs. 1147 (1090 A. D.) about the way as to how the kings took steps to overcome all oppositions of this system.⁷

It is not very surprising to note that due to the organisation of such a type of class in the Hindu society the people of the country, in majority, became corrupt.

1 A. K. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 344

2 B. P. Majumdar : Op. cit., p. 370

3 A. I., Vol. II, p. 457

4 B. P. Majumdar. Op. cit., pp. 371

5 B. P. Majumdar - Op. cit., p. 370 and for the various evidences also see ibid., pp. 370 ff

6 Ibid., p. 371

7 Ibid., pp. 373- The names of the four festivals given by Dr. B. P. Majumdar, are the Udakeseva—Mahotsava or the Udasevika Utsava, the Savarotsava, the Kamudi, Mahotsava, and the Madanotsava. For its detailed, See Ibid., pp. 373—77

Especially the ruling and fighting class on whom the burden of the nation depended became feeble and pleasure-loving and unnecessarily wasted their time and energy in merriments and physical pleasures. The time was hard and tough for the country, as the Central Asians had begun to operate on this country with a fresh zeal and planned scheme. The causes for the defeat of the Hindus and their failure in putting up a successful resistance must have been many, but infiltration of such evils into society was not less responsible for the loss of the independence of the country.

We also learn from Merchant Sulaiman, an Arab traveller of the ninth century, that "If any man in the Indies runs away with a woman and abuses her body, they kill both him and the woman, unless it be proved that she was forced, then the man only is punished with death: but if the woman consented to the evil deed, they are punished with death, both the one and the other."¹ How far this account of Merchant Sulaiman should be taken as an authentic picture of the age cannot be ascertained. But it does suggest that there were certain strict rules for the persons found guilty in adultery and they were severely punished by the Kings for such crimes.

1 Ancient Accounts of Idnia and China, op. cit., p. 34

CHAPTER III

Religion

Ibn Khurdadba has described that in India there are forty-two religions.¹ Al Idrisi also observes that "Among the principal nations of India there are forty-two sects. Some recognize the existence of a creator, but not of prophets; while others deny the existence of both. Some acknowledge the intercessory powers of graven stones, and others worship holy stones, on which butter and oil is poured. Some pay adoration to fire, and cast themselves into the flame. Others adore the sun and consider it the creator and director of the world. Some worship trees; others pay adoration to serpents, which they keep in stables, and feed it as well as they can, deeming this to be a meritorious work. Lastly, there are some who give themselves no trouble about any kind of devotion, and deny everything."²

In fact, to a casual Arab traveller there appeared to be many religions, but apparently they failed to understand that all the existing religions, constituting various modes of worship, was governed by one great religion which has been given the name of Hinduism.³ It is also

1 Ibid., p. 17; the *Jamiu-l Hikayat* increases the number of religions in India to forty-eight, and the *Bahjatu-l Tawarikh*, in Paris Library, sets them down as 948 as quoted in E. D., Vol. I, p. 17 and note 2

2 E. D., Vol. I, p. 76

3 M. H. I., Vol. II, p. 196

to be noted that there was no conflict or opposition in any of the different modes of worship, mentioned by them.¹ Siva, Vishnu, Aditya, Devi, Ganesa and even some trees and animals were worshipped, but all these kinds of worship were various phases of one and the same religion and had no ill feeling or any conflict among themselves. It is to be noted here that all these various modes of worship formed the parts of the one and all the embracing religion, called the Vedic religion which was supposed to sanction and countenance all these different forms of worship.² As a matter of fact, the Vedic religion was the most common one in India at this time, and had virtually supplanted Buddhism from most of the places excepting Bengal and Magadha.³ The progress of Jainism was so slow even in the South where it had taken roots centuries ago that by this time it could not appear as a prominent religion and remained untouched in most of the places of India. Hinduism had definitely flourished almost all over the country and had overshadowed all other religions completely.

Marchant Sulaiman seems to have been very much impressed by the Tapasvis and saints of our country. He mentions the instance of an ascetic who stood facing the sun in the market of Multan for sixteen years in the same position without being melted by the heat. He further describes that "In India there are persons who, in accordance with their profession, wander in the woods and mountains, and rarely communicate with the rest of mankind. Some

1 Ibid., p. 196

2 Ibid., p. 197

3 Ibid., p. 197

times they have nothing to eat but herbs and fruits of the forests. Some of them go about naked.”¹ This description of Sulaiman applies to the sadhus and sanyasis, who often moved naked and went about begging or fasting.

Religious Toleration : Not only the Chalukya Kings of Gujarat, as stated earlier, were liberal² but the Gahadnvalas of Kanauj and Benaras were also liberal in their religious outlook.³ Ibn Asir, the celebrated author of the *Kamil-ut-Tawarikh* mentions that in the Kingdom of Gahadavalas there were Musalmans since the days of Sultan Muhmud “who continued faithful to the law of Islam, and constant in prayer and good works.”⁴ This account had howevre come to light just before Shahab-ud-din’s final victory over the Gahadvala King Jaichand in 1194 A.D. This information, therefore, proves that the Muslims were not penalised for their religion, but were permitted to carryout their religous duties without any interference from the Hindu rulers.⁵ Even in case of the Chahamanas we find a complete religious toleration who gallantly defended their faith and freedom against the Muslims for centuries together. They also seem to have accorded liberal attitude towards the Muslims, Although, we find many instances of the destruction of the Hindu temples in the Chahaman dominions, yet we have not a single reference as to when a Chahaman had destroyed a mosque.⁶ The

1 E. D. Vol. I, p. 6

2 See above pp. 46—50

3 Miss R. Niyogi, op. cit., p. 195

4 E. D., Vol. II, p. 251

5 Miss R. Niyogi, Op. cit.: p- 200

6 Dr. Dashrath Sharma : Early Chauhan Dynasties, p. 237

Chahamanas were mighty and powerful kings and people like Hamira and Kanhadeva could have easily destroyed the Mosques.¹ It is also to be noted here that the time was high and tough for the Hindus who suffered greatly in the matter of religion at the hands of the Muslim invaders, but they did not leave their old policy of the religious toleration even at the time of crisis.

The Arab travellers are unanimous in describing the religious importance of Multan.² According to them Multan was one of the most celebrated places for the Hindu worship where people come on pilgrimages from very long distances.³ According to Al Masudi "the inhabitants of Sind and India perform pilgrimages to it from the most distant places: they carry money, precious stones, aloe-wood, and all sorts of perfumes there to fulfil their vows."⁴ According to the same traveller the present offered to this idol-temple was the greatest source of income to the king of the place.⁵ Al Istakhri describes in detail about the grandeur and religious significance attached to it.⁶ He thus frankly writes that "In Multan there are no men either of Hind or Sind who worship idols except those who worship this idol and in this temple."⁷ Ibn Haukal coming in the middle of the

1 Ibid., p. 237

2 Abu Zaid, Al Musudi, Al Istakhri, Ibn Haukal, Al Idrisi, E. D., Vol. I, p. 11, 23, pp. 27-28, p. 35, p. 82

3 Abu Zaid, E. D., Vol. I, p. 11

4 E. D., Vol. I, p. 23

5 Ibid., p. 23

6 Ibid., pp. 27-28

7 Ibid., p. 28

tenth century makes remarks almost identical to what have been made by Al Istakhri.¹ Al Idrisi places the idol of Multan on top. "There is no idol here" writes Al Idrisi "which is highly venerated by the Indians, who come on pilgrimages to visit it from the most distant parts of the country, and make offerings of valuables, ornaments and immense quantities of perfumes."² He further writes that "there is no idol in India or in Sind which is more highly venerated. The people make it the object of a pious pilgrimage, and to obey it is a law."³

All these make one thing clear that the idol temple of Multan was the most celebrated one in India at the time the Arab travellers visited India. The author of the *Futuhu-l Buldan* and the *Chach-Nama* which are the main sources for the history of the Arabs Conquest of Sind and Multan, testify the above facts.⁴ Perhaps it was the same temple which was plundered by Muhammad bin Kasim in 713 A. D. and that he obtained fabulous wealth from the temple.⁵

But it is surprising to note that the Arab travellers and historians who have described the wealth, grandeur and the significance of the temple of Multan at length do not mention the mode of worship of that temple. They simply mentioned it as an idol temple without disclosing

1 *Ibid.*, p. 35-36

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82

3 *Ibid.*, p. 82

4 *Futuhu-l Buldan*, Tr. E. D., Vol. I, p. 123; and *Ibid.* pp. 205-206

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 123 and p. 206

its identity. Dr. S. Maqbul Ahmad identifies it with the temple of "Sun-god Aditya," which was worshipped and revered by the Hindus.¹

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Dr. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami unnecessarily argues in the defence of the destruction of the Hindu temples and images by the Turks in the 12th and 13th centuries.²

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He, in his argument, puts forth some of the examples of the Hindu kings who also destroyed temples and images in the course of warfare. "One west Chalukyan inscription *"according to him"* formally accuses the Chola king of having burnt Jain temples in the Belvola province,"³ In fulfilment of his own views he also quotes few other examples.⁴ This view of K. A. Nizami does suggest that the early Medieval India also suffered from religious conflict and the Hindu Kings paid no respect to religion in the course of warfare. It is surprising, indeed, to note that the Arab travellers also have not mentioned such instances when a Hindu King had destroyed a temple and insulted the sacred idol. Hindus in general were quite liberal in matters of religion and they indiscriminately gave protection to every religion. Even the most hostile designs of the Muslim conquerors towards our religion could not change the liberal religious policy of the Hindu Kings. At the time northern Indian Hindu

1 Medieval Indian Quarterly, published by the Department of History Muslim University, Aligarh, July—oct.—1957, Nos. 122, p. 100

2 Dr. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, op. cit., p. 88

3 Ibid., page 88. Similarly the Vaisnavas of the South level their charges against the Cholas : Development of Hindu Polity and Political Theories (Calcutta, 1938). Narayan Chandra Bandyopadhyaya, p. 178

4 Dr. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami : Op. cit., p. 88 and footnote 4 and 5

temples were utterly ruined and images were broken to pieces and idols were being insulted, the Hindu Kings continued to offer protections to mosques and the Muslim Community in their Kingdoms.¹ We do not find a single reference to the destruction of a mosque even by the Chahamans who were the greatest foes to the Turk conquerors in this country. The Arab travellers have unanimously admired this liberal religious policy of the Hindu Kings very highly.² Dr. Nizami's thinking that the Hindus also destroyed the temples and images in the early Medieval India cannot be taken as a general practice of the age as we certainly know that it was the religious sentiments of the Hindus which had repeatedly saved Multan from falling into the hands of some of the ambitious Hindu rulers.³ This alone shatters the conviction taken by Dr. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami and the instances quoted by him in support of his view-point must have been very rare and cannot be taken as a general practice of the age. The conflict between the modes of the different forms of worship is frequently referred to in the history of South as well as in the North.⁴ In South, however, the period of eighth century was the period of "revolutionary activity in religion and politics, of ceaseless conflict of ideas and of peoples, of dramatic rise and overthrow of dynasties; of philosophical debate in schools and sectarian dispute in temples."⁵ But this was purely a conflict of ideas and

1 See above pp.46—50

2 Ibid.

3 E. D., Vol. I, p. 36

4 Dr. Tara Chand : Influence of Islam on Indian Culture (1963), p. 131 and 1'2

5 Ibid., p. 86

religion among the people which unlike Islam never meant the whole-sale destruction of the other. Perhaps, due to this reason it failed to catch the eyes of the Arab travellers who travelled to India from time to time in the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries respectively. The Hindus, infact, have never been iconoclasts¹ as suggested by Dr. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami.

1 M. H. I., Vol, II, p, 248

CHAPTER IV

Political Condition

The Arab travellers have also depicted largely about the political condition of India as they found at the time of their visit to this country. Though the information derived therefrom is not sufficient to show the complete picture of the political condition, but all the same, it is of immense value. And we find, here and there, some valuable accounts of these Arabs, which, if corroborated to and supplemented with other available sources, will undoubtedly assist us in the estimation of the political condition of India under review.

The Regional Division of India : The idea of dividing India into nine divisions is found mentioned in the account of Rashidu-ddin, an Arab writer,¹ who, probably, derived his knowledge from a book called 'Batankal'. He writes that "Philosophers and Geometricians have divided the land of Hind into nine unequal parts."²

1 Rashidu-ddin completed his book *Jamiu-t Tawarikh* in A. H. 710 or A. D. 1310. Rashidu-ddin wrote his book in Porsian, which is a rare work for our study.

2 E. D., Vol. I, p. 44 and note 1; but 'nine' may be, after all, merely a traditional number in the ancient world. Nine province was an ancient synonym for China proper, as much as "Nau Khands" with like meaning was an ancient name of India. Manu makes a threefold division of upper India, "Brahmarsha, Brahmavartta and Nadhyadess," and this last portion is accurately defined by Al Beruni and Rashidu-ddin. The nine fold division is that of the "navadwipas" or nine portions given in the Vishnu Purana p. 175. For continual notes on divisions of India See S. B. Chowdhary in *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. XXVII, Pt. III, No. 81, p. 273ff

In this connection, the description of Al Beruni also refers to the nine divisions of India. He writes that "astronomers and astrologers divide the directions according to the lunar stations. Therefore, the country, too, is divided according to the lunar stations, and the figure which represents this division is similar to a tortoise."¹ He further writes that Varahmihira calls each of the Navakhanda a varga. "By them (the vargas) Bharatavarsha i. e., half of the world, is divided into nine parts, the central one, the Eastern and....."² This scheme of nine divisions as outlined by Varahmihira was also adequately worked out by the nine lists which he furnished. There is yet another piece of evidence to support this tradition. Bhaskaracharya, another famous astrologer, who was born in the 12th century A. D., also divides India into nine parts.³ Therefore, it is clear that the division of India into nine parts was also familiar to the Arab travellers of the period.⁴

1 A. I., Vol. I, pp. 296-97

2 Ibid., p. 297

3 Sidhanta Siromani. Ch. III, 41 Tr. L. Wilson. Bib. Indica., Calcutta 1861 p. 120

4 However, this idea of dividing India into several regions had been a matter of gradual growth, the nucleus of which is to be traced in the Vedas. The Aitareya shows acquaintance with the scheme of dividing India into five divisions, which was current in popular use and supplied for many centuries a comprehensive and workable structure of the geographical divisions of India. But while describing Bharatvarsa, every Purana records that Bharatvarsa is divided into nine parts or bheda which is supplemented by the scheme of dividing India into nine dvipas, such as Indra, Kascru etc. The nine divisions refer to the nine different parts of its body : Ethnic Settlements in Ancient India by S. B. Chowdhury Jan. 1955 pp. 5, and an article of the same author on "Regional divisions of Ancient India ABORI, XXIX, pp. 123-146 and also the nine dvipas of Bharatvarsa in IA. Lix 1930. pp. 206-208, 224-

Political Divisions of India : The death of Harsha Vardhana in 647 A. D., marked the end of a glorious epoch and his vast kingdom broke into several small and big states.

Describing the political condition of India, Merchant Sulaiman says that there are more kings in India than in China.¹ Kingship is hereditary and every king is independent of the other and do not recognise the supremacy of any other sovereign.² The kings drink neither wine nor vinegar, because they believe that a king addicted to intoxicating drinks is incapable of administering the affairs of his kingdom.³ Al Masudi has also described the political condition of India in the following words : "India extends on the side of the mountains to Khurasan and Sind, as far as Tibet. There prevails a great difference of language and religion in these kingdoms and they are frequently at war with each other."⁴

The Kingdom of Balhara : Amongst the various kings of India mentioned by Arab writers the kings of Balhara, the Vallabhi Rajas of the South appear to have made great impression on them. The early Arab Geographers are unanimous in their spelling of the title 'Balhara'. Merchant Sulaiman says that it is a title

226 of the same author. Dr. H. C. Roy Chowdhury in Journal of the Department of Letters, Calcutta University Press Vol. XIX, 15-20 "India in Puranic Cosmography".

1 M. I. Q., July-Oct. 1957, p. 104

2 E. D., Vol. I, pp. 6-7

3 E. D., Vol. I, p. 7

4 Murujul Zahab Tr, E. D., Vol. I, p. 20

similar to the Cosroes of the Persians.¹ Ibn Khurdadba says that, it signifies "king of kings"² According to Al Masudi it is a title borne by all the kings of the city of Mankir which was a great centre of India,³ while Ibn Haukal states that it is a name derived from that of the country.⁴ Al Idrisi like Ibn Khurdadba also calls it "king of kings", but he adds that this title was hereditary.⁵ Thus, it seems clear that Balhara was the general title of the rulers of the Duccan with Malkhed, south of Gulbarga, as their capital. The king is described by Sulaiman as the noblest of all the kings of India,⁶ and according to him, none of the kings of India was as intensely in love with the Arabs (Muslims) as he was or as the inhabitants of his kingdom were.⁷ His kingdom extended as far as Cambay in the North-West and Konkan to the west.⁸ During his visit at Cambay Al Masudi mentions that the ruler of that region was a local Brahman whose name, according to him, was Baniya (probably Vaniya in Gujarati)⁹ who ruled in the name of Balhara. Again, when he visited Chaul in the Kolaba district of Bombay, the region was ruled by a person called Jang (probably the Arabic form of Ganga).¹⁰

1 E. D., Vol. I, p. 4 and *ibid.*, p. 354

2 Kitabul Masalik Wa-l Mamalik Tr. E. D., Vol. I, p. 13; for similar interpretation see also Al Masudi and Al Idrisi, in E. D., Vol. I p. 21 and p. 86

3 Muruju-l Zahab Tr. E. D., Vol. I, pp. 19-29; and *Ibid.*, p. 354

4 E. D., Vol. I, p. 354

5 Nuzhatu-l Mushtak Tr. E. D., Vol. I, p. 86

6 M. I. Q., July-Oct., 1957, pp. 104-5

7 *Ibid.*, p. 105

8 Cf. Muruj, Vol. I, pp. 382-383

9 *Ibid.*, p. 254

10 Muruj II, p. 85

Arab travellers are also unanimous in the supremacy of the Balhara Kingdom. Merchant Sulaiman, while describing the importance of this kingdom, states that "The Balhara is the most eminent of the princes of India, and the Indians acknowledge his superiority. Every prince in India is master in his own state, but all pay homage to the supremacy of the Balhara."¹ He further adds that "the representatives sent by the Balhara to other princes are received with most profound respect in order to show him honour."² Merchant Sulaiman's these views are also supplemented by Al Masudi³ and other Arab writers.

Here the Arab traveller's praise for the state of Balhara seems to be lop sided. As a matter of fact Balhara was always at war with the rulers of Kanauj who were the greatest enemies of the Arabs. Hence, prompted by the desire of gaining the favour of the Arabs the ruler of Balhara accorded generous treatment towards them in propagating their religion freely.⁴ Moreover, when Northern India suffered most inhuman molestations at the hands of the Muslims, the South West India had already come in contact with them through trade and commerce. Hence, it was not unnatural for the Arabs to give lop sided statement in the praise of this state of Balhara.

1 E. D., Vol. I, p. 3

2 Ibid., p. 3; and for similar interpretation see Muruju-l Zahab, Tr. E. D., Vol. I, p. 21

3 Muruju-l Zahab Tr. E. D., Vol. I, pp. 20-21

4 A. K. Srivastava : A Study of the Muslim Account of India, upto the 12th century A. D. a Ph- D. thesis of the Gorakhpur University, not yet published, p. 166

The Imperial Kanauj : Besides Balhara, there are other kings mentioned by them as Jurz.¹ They belonged to the Gurjar or Gurjara-Prathara dynasty of Kanauj. They are described by Merchant Sulaiman as the greatest enemy of the Arabs and Islam.² And "This king maintains numerous forces, and no other Indian prince has so fine a cavalry".³ He also possessed great riches, including numerous horses, camels⁴ and elephants.⁵ Al Masudi, describing the same kingdom, states that among the kings of India is the "Bauura, who is lord of the city of Kanauj, situated far from the sea. This is the title given to all the sovereigns of that kingdom."⁶ "He has large armies in garrisons on the north and on the south, on the east and on the west, for he is surrounded on all sides by warlike kings"⁷ He is also an enemy of Balhara.⁸

The Palas : Another great kingdom of the North mentioned by these writers is that of the Pala, kings of

1 But Al Masudi its gives name as Bauura, the king of Kanauj (E. D., Vol. I, p. 23). "The new ruler of Kanauj was called Mihira Bhoja as he was born by the favour of God Surya; Adi Varaha, because he uplifted the realm like the Divine Boar, the incarnation of Vishnu; Vriddha Bhoja by the later writers of distinguish him from the later Bhoja the Paramara. The Arab travellers called him Bauura, possibly a corruption of Varaha or Baraha; they also referred to him as the king of Jurz, an Arab corruption of the word Gurjara." K. M. Munshi's foreward, "The age of Imperial Kanauj", X,

2 E. D., Vol. I, p. 4

3 E. D., Vol. I, p. 4

4 Ibid., p. 4

5 Ibid., p. 4 and 91

6 E. D., Vol. I, p. 21

7 Ibid., p. 21

8 Ibid., p. 22

Bengal, to whom they refer Rahma or Ruhmi.¹ According to Sulaiman and Al Masudi, they were at war both with Balharas of the South and Gurjara of the North, as their army was bigger than of the two.² When they went to war, they put into the field about 50,000 elephants besides, camels, horses and foot soldiers etc. They also took the field only in winter because elephants cannot bear thirst.⁴ It is also stated in Merchant Sulaiman's account that about ten to fifteen thousand men were employed in their army for fulfilling and washing clothes.⁵

The Policy of War and Annexation : According to the Arab writers, the Indians were not devoid of political consciousness. Merchant Sulaiman records that "The Indians sometimes go to war for conquest, but the occasions are rare. I have never seen the people of one country submit to the authority of another, except in the case of that country which comes next to the country of Pepper.⁶ When a king subdues a neighbouring state, he places over it a man belonging to the family of the fallen prince, who carries on the government in the name of the conqueror. The inhabitants would not suffer it to

1 E. D., Vol. I, p. 5. Al Masudi calls it Rahma, E. D., Vol. I, p. 25; see also M. I. Q. July-Oct. 1957 p. 105: The Pala kings of Bengal and Behar reigned probably from about the middle of the 8th century A. D. to about the middle of the 12th century; W.H. Moreland and A.C. Chatterjee, A short History of India, 1945 p. 114 and p. 150. The Second king of the line was Dharmapala (769—C 815).

2 E. D., Vol. I, p. 5 and p. 25

3 *ibid.*, p. 5 and p. 25

4 *Ibid.*, p. 5 and p. 25

5 *Ibid.*, p. 5

6 Malabar. E. D., Vol. 1, p. 7 footnote 1

be otherwise.”¹ Further, we are told by those Muslim writers² that the Indians are naturally inclined to justice. We have enough evidences to prove that in Ancient and Medieval Hindu India Empire did not always mean annexation. Sometimes a conquered prince was allowed to rule over his territory, and in case of his death any of his family members was allowed to rule after the payment of certain tribute.³

Among the eight objectives of the kings, one was the conversion of princies into tributary chiefs or feudatory vassals.⁴ Sukranitisara categorically states that the victorious kings should grant half and a quarter of the revenues of the subjugated kingdom to the vanquished kings' son and wife respectively.⁵ Several instances can be quoted to show that the kings of the Northern India translated the above mentioned precept into practice.⁶

1 E. D., Vol. I, p. 7

2 Ibid., p. 88

3 M. H: I., Vol. II, p. 221

4 Socio-Economic History of Northern India (1030-1194 A. D.), By Bhakat Prasad Majumdar, Calcutta 1960, p. 13

5 Sukranitisara, IV 7 301-809 (ed. Sarkar), Sukranitisara, edited Jivananda Vidyasagara, Tr: into English by B K Sarkar, Pub. Panini Office, Allahabad 1914.

6 The Devaraksita family of Pithi, which was defeated by Ramapalas's maternal uncle, Madana, was allowed to rule. In the period between 1075 and C 1135 A. D., Somavamsis were allowed to continue to exercise their sway in the subordination of the Eastern Ganga kings, B: I: Majumdar's Socio-Economic History of Northern India p, 14: In Dr. Sircar's observation of the Somavamsi chronology, we find that though Viravarkesarin was ousted by Anantavarman Chodaganga, yet his relatives Karnakesari and Ranakosari, were allowed to rule over Orissa and feudatories. (Journal of the Orissa Historical Research Society' I' p. 297: Again the rule of Jayasimha (C 1055-1059-60 A.D)

There were, however, certain circumstances in which it was not feasible for the victors to allow any member of the vanquished family to continue to rule over the territory even in the capacity of a vassal.¹ When the Chalukya ruler Jayasimha, having killed Navaghana, the Abhira ruler in a battle, directly annexed the valuable Surastra territory to his kingdom, he appointed Sajjana as his Dandadhipati to superintend the affairs of Surastra.²

It is thus now clear that in India during this period there were both large and small states. C. V. Vaidya observes that these kingdoms were often at war not for conquest but to prevent conquest of the one by the other, "as we see from the struggle going on during this period between the Pratiharas of Kanauj and the Rashtrakutas of Malkhed as also between either of these and the Palas of Bengal,"³ Therefore, the Arab's

the successor of Bhoja Parmara, also shows that inspite of the fact that Chalukya Somesvara and Kalachuri Karna decisively defeated Bhoja, yet they allowed the relative of the vanquished king to succeed to the throne of Dhara : DHNI, II, 873-873, Calcutta 1931 and 1936. The Chalukyas of Anahillapataka also followed the same principle with regard to the relatives of the defeated kings like Barbaraka : Dvyasrayakavya of Hemchandra XII, 65—76. XIII. 2 (edited by A. V. Kathvate, Pub. Bombay Gazetteer Vol. I, 1, p. 185 and DHNI II pp. 914 and 997. Similarly, Kashmir was no exception, Somavarman ruled Chamba Valley as a vassal of the Kashmir king, though his father had been defeated by Ananta . Rajtarangini, VII 218 Tr., with an introduction, commentary and appendices, by M. A. Stein, Westminster, 1900. The Gahadvalas also appear to have adopted the policy of retaining the defeated king's family as feudatories so far as their policy relating to the Kalachuries was concerned : DHNI II, p. 751

1 B. P. Majumdar's op. cit., p. 14

2 Prabandhachintamani Tr. Tawney, pp. 95-96

3 M. H. I., Vol. II, p. 222

testimony that during this period several states of India were at war with one another, seems to be a correct estimate.¹

Military Organisation : Merchant Sulaiman writes that "the troops of the Kings of India are numerous, but they do not receive pay. The king assembles them only in case of a religious war. They then come out, and maintain themselves without receiving anything from the king."²

But this statement of Merchant Sulaiman that in India there were no standing army which was paid regularly does not seem to be a correct one, for we find as recorded by the same author, that the king of Balhara had a large army who used to pay regularly to his troops as was the practice among the Arabs.³ It shows clearly that Balhara or the Rashtrakuta kings maintained strong and regular paid armies. The pratiharas of Kanauj and the Palas of Bengal also kept their armies in the same fashion.⁴

Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that certain classes of Kshatriyas chiefly Bhaibands (Kulputras) and others were bound, in enjoyment of their land, by the obligation of military services. They provided for the necessary volunteers whenever required who were

1 Also see A. K. Srivastava : op. cit., p. 171

2 Salsilatu-t Tawarikh Tr. E. D., Vol. I, p. 7

3 M. H. I., II, p. 223

4 Ibid., p. 223

not paid by the state but they maintained themselves out of their own income derived from their land.¹

The Division and the Strength of the Army : It is laid down in the Sastras that the Kshatriyas were the only caste which was responsible for the profession of arms and fighting with the enemies.² But this does not mean that others were excluded from this profession altogether. In fact, the military profession was also adopted by many Brahmanas. Drona and Kripa, although Brahmanas, took very active part in the battle of the Mahabharata. Sukranitisara³ also states that the caste does not determine the quality of soldiers. They may be Sudras, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, Mlechhas or of mixed castes but they must be, in order to serve as soldiers, brave, self-disciplined, well built, devoted to their master and their Dharma and actuated by a feeling of hatred towards the enemy. It is also mentioned in Kamandaka⁴ that the hereditary army should consist mainly, though not exclusively, of Kshatriyas. It is, therefore, evident that the profession of arms and the fighting with the enemies did not attract the duty and profession of the Kshatriyas alone. But it was open for all the castes even for the Brahmanas,

1 Ibid. p. 223; It is evident that such armies, as not having been paid in cash by the state must have had assumed great strength and power at the occurrence of the Dynastic changes, and it is probable that they might have formed a kingdom of their own.

2 According to the four varanas the profession of arms is the close preserve of the Kshatriyas; see also B. P. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 43. Similarly, Prof. Habib also seems to have accepted that the Brahmins did not form the military profession, Habib's Introduction to the History of India As Told by Its Own Historians, Vol. II, p. 44 (Aligarh edition).

3 Sukranitisara, ed. Calcutta, Vol. II, pp. 137-39

4 Kamandaka, Vol. IV, pp. 63, 65 and 67

although they do not appear to have formed the bulk of the army.

Describing the military strength of India, especially that of the kingdom of Bauura, the king of Kanauj, Al Masudi, writes that "this king has four armies, according to the four quarters of the wind. Each of them numbers 700,000 or 900,000 men. The army of the north wars against the prince of Multan, and with the Musalmans, his subjects, on the frontier. The army of the south fights against the Balhara, king of Mankir. The other two armies march to meet enemies in every direction." Testifying the same view Merchant Sulaiman also states that "this king maintains numerous forces, and no other Indian prince has so fine a cavalry."²

As the ruler of Kanauj did not have good relations with the other ruling dynasties of India, the rulers of Kanauj rightly used to post four armies regularly in the north, south, east and west directions. Chiefly in the west, the empire was confronted by the Arabs in Sindh and Multan which necessitated the posting of a strong army in that direction. The army of the south was posted against the Balhara, who was a friend of the Arabs.³ And it is recorded by the Arabs that the armies in the east as well as in the north constantly moved from place to place,⁴ probably to protect the frontiers from the enemies.

1 Muruzu-l Zahab, Tr. E. D., Vol. I, p. 23

2 E. D., Vol. I, p. 4

3 The Arab Geographers are unanimous in their praise of Balhara. It was only because they were the friend of the Arabs. E. D., Vol. I, p. 4 and 34 etc.

4 M. H. I., Vol. II, p. 224

Speaking of the constituents of the Indian army, these travellers inform us that the army of Kanauj was chiefly consisted of cavalry,¹ while that of the Rashtrakutas was consisted of all the three main arms, i e., foot, horse, and elephant.² But all the empires were especially strong in one arm; the Kanauj forces in excellent cavalry, the Bengal forces in elephants, and the Duccan forces in infantry. Rashtrakutas were, however, also known for their fine cavalry³ and elephants,⁴ while the Pratiharas of Kanauj were also famous for their camel⁴ and elephant forces.⁶

It was, generally, believed that the foot soldiers were the main source of strength on all occasions.⁷ Niti-prakasika states that each horseman was supported by a thousand of foot soldiers.⁸

But after the advent of the Arab rule in Persia and Western Asia, it became difficult for India to have good horses.⁹ It was one of the reasons for the rapid decline in the

1 Murujul Zahab, Tr. E. D., Vol. , p. 3

2 Salsilatu-t Tawarikh., Tr. E. D., Vol. , p. 3; Nuzhatu-l Mushtak., Tr. E. D., Vol. I, p. 87

3 E. D., Vol. I., p. 4 and p. 25

4 E. D., Vol. I, p. 25 and p. 87

5 Ibid., p. 4

6 Ibid., p. 91

7 Bhoja; Yuktikalpataru (ed. Cal.), p. 7

8 As evidenced by Mahabharat, Adiparva (Mbh. Adiparva, II, 19 : ed. Sukhtankar, 1, 2, 15, and the Lexicon Vaijayanti (Vaijanti Bhumikanda, ch. on Kshatriya, verses 57-58) in definition of patti.

9 It is mentioned in the Surangadhara-paddati, (edited by P. Peterson, p. 256, verse No. 1675), that the only breed, which was tolerably good and was available to them, was Saurashtra horses.

efficiency of the cavalry in India which ultimately weakened the military strength of India. Not only this but also the Indian cavalry force could not face the horses of the Turko-Afghan invaders who came to invade India,¹ in the 11th and 12th centuries A. D.

Arabs also testify to the use of the elephants and camels in warfare. They (especially elephants) were trained for wars,² both for offensive as well defensive purposes. The Bengal forces were famous for their strong elephant corps. However, we find considerable number of elephants being engaged by the Hindu rulers to fight against the foreign invaders during the period under review.³

Neither any of the Muslim writers nor an Indian inscription speaks of any use of chariots in warfares. It appears that chariots were no longer in use in wars during this period.

The king of the northern India did not have regular naval force, but some of the Indian rulers used to maintain it.⁴ The Bhagalpur inscription⁵ refers that

1 The Cambridge Medieval History, Vol. I, p. 331, also records the fine qualities of Turko-Afghan horses.

2 Megasthenese, fragment 1, p. 30; these elephants were trained for war from the very early age, POIHC., (B. P. Sinha's article on Elephants in Ancient Indian Army), 1955, pp. 51—57

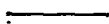
3 A. K. Srivastava : op. cit., p. 177

4 The Maritime activities were quite familiar to in south even during the time of Dravidians. Each of the great kings seems to have possessed and maintained a fleet of several ships : "Arts of war as practised in South India" V. R. Ramchandra Dikshitar, in the Annals of the Bhandarkar Institute, Vol. VIII, part III, p. 393* January 1927, Poona.

5 I. A., XV, p. 305, The other contemporary inscriptions too refer to the naval battles. In Bengal there was a naval officer called Naubatvyapritaka

the palas of Bengal and Bihar maintained a regular naval force. It is evident that the country was full of rivers and the distance could be easily travelled by boats. Al Beruni¹ and Nizamuddin² seem to have been impressed by this wing of the army which was engaged in the warfare with the Muhammadans. Similarly, the Chola kings of the south also possessed a well organised naval force with the help of which they conquered distant countries around the bay of Bengal.

It appears that the strength of the army has been exaggerated by these Arab Geographers. Sulaiman³ and Masudi,⁴ as regards the number of elephants of the Pala rulers, state it to be as 50,000 where as Ibn Khurda-dba observes it as only 5,000⁵ But this discrepancy might have been due to the fact that whereas the formers have described the strength of the Pala army while it was at its peak in the most glorious reign of Devapala the later speaks of it during the reign of Narain Pal or one of his weak successors when the Pala glory had shrunk to its bottom.



(E. I. XII, 40). During the Sena period the Bengal fleet had proceeded on a conquering expedition upto the whole course of the Ganges : (Inscriptions of Bengal, Vol. III, p. 48 by N. G. Majumdar). But these boats were used both for civil and military purposes. The Yuktikalpataru plainly mentions that the king, who has boats, wins war and the king, who, through ignorance, does not keep boats, loses his prestige, vigour and treasury (ed. Cal.), p. 299, verse 30-31

1 A. I., Vol. I, p. 208

2 E. D., Vol. II p. 478 (Aligarh ed., p. 481)

3 E. D., Vol. I, p. 5

4 E. D., Vol. 1, p. 25.

5 E. D., Vol. 1, p. 14

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